



## High Levels of Medical Mistrust is Prevalent in EMS Professionals

Jonathan R. Powell, MPA, NRP; Megan Gregory, PhD; Jordan D. Kurth, MSED; Sarah MacEwan, PhD; Eben Kenah, ScD; Ann Scheck McAlearney, ScD, MS; Ashish R. Panchal, MD, PhD

*Poster Presentation at the annual meeting of the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians / January 2022 / Prehospital Emergency Care January/February 2022, vol. 26, no. 1*

**Background:** Mistrust of healthcare systems impacts how medical care is delivered and accessed in the US. Through their daily practice, EMS professionals have a nuanced view of medical care delivery and local healthcare systems. However, the extent of distrust that these EMS professionals have in healthcare organization is not known. Our objective was to evaluate mistrust in health care organizations by EMS professionals. We hypothesized that mistrust is common among EMS professionals and is associated with a wide variety of EMS characteristics.

**Methods:** This study was a cross-sectional analysis of nationally certified civilian EMS professionals ages 18-85 years old. An electronic survey was distributed including an evaluation of mistrust of healthcare organizations using the previously validated Medical Mistrust Index (MMI), a 7 question inventory asked on a 5-point Likert scale. This data was combined with demographic and work-related characteristics from the National Registry of EMTs dataset. Defined by the MMI mean survey score (1-5), descriptive statistics were calculated for those who had low mistrust (<2.5), moderate mistrust (2.5-3.5), or had high mistrust in health care organizations (>3.5). A multivariable logistic regression model (OR, 95% CI) was used to describe associations between demographics and work-related characteristics with high levels of medical mistrust (MMI mean survey score>3.5).

**Results:** A total of 2,584 respondents met initial inclusion criteria (response rate=13%). Of these, 2,150 answered all MMI questions. High mistrust of healthcare organization was expressed by 32% of EMS professionals while 45% and 23% reported moderate and low mistrust, respectively. Odds of higher mistrust increased with male sex (1.32, 1.04-1.68) and working at a 3<sup>rd</sup> service agency (referent fire-based agency: 1.44, 1.07-1.97). Additionally, odds of high mistrust decreased with advanced education (referent high school/GED: Baccalaureate: 0.66, 0.46-0.96 ; Graduate degrees: 0.57, 0.36-0.92).

**Conclusion:** High levels of medical mistrust of health care organizations was prevalent in this national sample of EMS professionals. While there are associations with EMS demographic and workforce characteristics, further exploration is necessary to define the drivers and potential consequences of high medical mistrust in the EMS provider community.

