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# Police and partners: new ways of working together in Montréal

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to present an inter-agency practice integrated within a police intervention model which was developed for police officers and their partners in Montréal.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The Integrated Police Response for Abused Seniors (IPRAS) action research project (2013-2016) developed, tested, and implemented a police intervention model to counter elder abuse. Two linked phases of data collection were carried out: a diagnostic of police practices and needs (year 1) and an evaluation of the implementation of the intervention model and the resulting effects (years 2 and 3).

**Findings** – The facilitating elements to support police involvement in inter-agency practices include implementing a coordination structure regarding abuse cases as well as designating clear guidelines of the roles of both the police and their partners. The critical challenges involve staff turnover, time management and the exchange of information. It was recognised by all involved that it is crucial to collaborate while prioritising resource investment and governmental support, with regards to policy and financing, as well as adequate training.

**Practical implications** – The IPRAS model is transferable because its components can be adapted and implemented according to different police services. A guideline for implementing the model is available.

**Originality/value** – In the scientific literature, inter-agency collaboration is highly recommended but only a few models have been evaluated. This paper presents an inter-agency approach embedded in an evaluated police intervention model.

**Keywords** Police, Elder abuse, Adult protection, Abused seniors, Inter-agency approach, Intervention model, Montréal

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Elder abuse is a social and public health problem which is complex, prevalent, identifiable, fatal and costly, with multiple impacts on public safety as well as on physical, psychological and social spheres of older adults (Dong, 2017; Navarro *et al.*, 2013). While many definitions are proposed, the most commonly accepted comes from the World Health Organisation (2002): “Elder Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person. It can be of various forms: physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, and financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect” (p. 4). Despite a plethora of intervention strategies, the evaluation process is necessary to examine the best practices for prevention and direct intervention (Dong, 2017).

Parallel to the increasing social and political recognition of this problem, the last decade has seen the emergence of scientific literature which considers inter-agency and inter-professional collaboration to be one of the most effective approaches to counter this multifaceted issue. This supported approach relies on the rationale that it is impossible to effectively interpret and address a multifactorial problem through a single disciplinary or sectoral perspective (Blowers *et al.*, 2012; Brandl *et al.*, 2007). Ensuring an adequate and coherent response to the multiple needs of older adults living in abusive situations requires a joint effort from different professionals and agencies throughout the continuum of prevention, detection and intervention services (Brandl *et al.*, 2007; Twomey *et al.*, 2010; Williams, 2011).

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The promotion of collaborative approaches to counter elder abuse can be also be observed in the introduction of policy, governmental programmes and action plans in countries such as the USA, Canada, Japan and the UK (Daly and Jogerst, 2014; Government of Québec, 2010; Nakanishi *et al.*, 2009; Nerenberg, 2006; Williams, 2011). In Canada, the Québec government adopted new political guidelines in 2010 through the Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse (Government of Québec, 2010). The Action Plan, which was elaborated by thirteen departments and agencies committed to working together, highlights the central role of inter-agency collaboration. It recognised this approach as the cornerstone to improved intervention, and it therefore compelled different professionals, sectors and the general population to gather forces and work together towards a society free of all forms of elder abuse (Government of Québec, 2010).

Among the different actors called upon to participate in a concerted response to this issue, police involvement has been recognised as essential (Government of Québec, 2010; Navarro *et al.*, 2013; White and Lawry, 2009). Their status as first responders, as well as their relationship with the community, positions them as one of the main gateways to the health and social services network and as a central actor in after actor the identification, prevention and investigation of crimes committed against seniors (Ingram, 2011; Mosqueda and Dong, 2011; Navarro *et al.*, 2013; Ulrey and Brandl, 2012). Police services are increasingly encouraged to participate in clinical discussion and to be members of multidisciplinary teams due to their legal and criminal perspective which contributes to the shared knowledge with other professionals (Fleischmann, 2010; Schneider *et al.*, 2010). The growing number of elder abuse cases encountered in their daily work has motivated the creation of several police services and distinctive teams or specialised units, either specifically in response to abuse cases or cases involving other social issues (Fleischmann, 2010).

However, publications with a focus entirely devoted to police contribution and their participation in inter-agency and inter-professional approaches are still scarce. Scientific literature mainly evokes the importance of police participation in these collaborative approaches without going into a more detailed exploration about their role, needs or contributions within inter-agency and inter-professional working teams. Therefore, although the participation of the police force when responding to elder abuse is recognised and mentioned as central in the recent scientific literature, the phenomenon should be further documented to better understand existing issues and challenges so as to enhance participation.

This paper aims to present the Integrated Police Response for Abused Seniors (IPRAS) model while paying particular attention to the inter-agency component, which highlights new ways in which collaboration is being developed between police officers and their partners in Montréal, Québec (Canada). The overall process for developing, testing and evaluating the IPRAS model is also introduced. Findings which were derived from the evaluation of the model's pilot project provide the opportunity to discuss the facilitating elements, challenges and conditions required for enhancing inter-agency collaboration practices that include police involvement.

## The IPRAS model

The IPRAS model is the result of a three-year action research (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) project (2013-2016) between the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) (City of Montréal Police Service), and the Research Chair on Mistreatment of Older Adults from the University of Sherbrooke, Canada. The final outcome of the IPRAS project was the development of a police practice model aimed to empower police officers to recognise elder abuse situations and to take action in partnership with public health, social and justice services, as well as non-profit organisations (NGOs). It was a "work of art emerging in the doing of it" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p. 5). Since March, 2016, the model was permanently implemented within the SPVM, and practice guidelines were produced in French and English to facilitate the model's adaptation to other police services around the world (Beaulieu *et al.*, 2016).

The IPRAS model's conception and development was based on an inter-agency collaboration approach. The final IPRAS model recognises inter-agency collaboration as one of the main strategies of practice. The involvement of SPVM's key partners was identified as essential from

the beginning, as they continued to be throughout the model's development process. There already existed certain established collaborative practices among the police force, and there was a clear recognition that to tackle a complex problem such as elder abuse, the compilation of knowledge and resources is imperative. Consequently, practitioners from both the public and community sectors of health, social and justice services participated in data collection leading to the conception and the evaluation of the model. Additionally, members of the SPVM's Senior Partnership Committee accepted to form an advisory committee for the development of the IPRAS model. The committee, composed of representatives from governmental, public- and community-based agencies, assisted in every step of the process and gave precious advice cultivated from their respective experience in elder abuse situations and working with the police.

## Research design

### *Context description*

Currently, 16 per cent of the population of the City of Montréal is over 65 years of age (Ville de Montréal, 2014), but in 2026, more than one in five Montrealers will have reached this age threshold (Direction de santé publique, 2008). As in many other cities, police officers will therefore increasingly be called upon to work closely with the older adult population. The SPVM is the second largest municipal police force in Canada with 6,000 employees, including 4,000 police officers. Through its 32 local units, known as neighbourhood police stations (NPSs), which are supported by four investigation units (east, north, west and south), the SPVM serves the entire population of the island (2 million inhabitants).

### *General methodology for developing the IPRAS model*

All data collection activities were approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Sherbrooke. Each participant signed an information and consent form. The first step on the IPRAS model's development was to document police practices at the provincial, national and international level, as well as the practices and needs of the SPVM officers on elder abuse (data collection, year 1). Results identified 25 needs and provided the information required to design the structure of the model (practice scheme). Next step was to transform this practice scheme into an operational practice model. In order to do so, the SPVM formed an operational committee to work jointly with the IPRAS research team. Together, they prioritised their needs, identified the best operational responses for each one and defined the strategy for implementing and evaluating the model in a pilot project. The operational practice model was developed between February and April 2015. From May to September 2015, the SPVM proceeded to implement the pilot project in three NPSs and three investigation units. Concurrently, an evaluation strategy for the implementation phase and its effects was put into practice and adjustments were made. In November 2015, the SPVM launched the second phase of the pilot project by implementing the operational practice model in four other NPSs and in the service's fourth and last regional investigation unit (data collection, years 2 and 3). Once the pilot project was over, adjustments were made, and the SPVM adopted the final practice model in March 2016.

### *Data collection, year 1: diagnostic of police practices and needs*

In total, ten data collection activities were carried out between July 2013 and December 2014 (Beaulieu *et al.*, 2015). Altogether, 160 scientific articles and governmental documents were analysed, and 46 police services, 32 partners and more than 800 SPVM police officers were consulted (Table I). Since one of the goals of this first data collection was to explore the partners' visions regarding their collaboration with the SPVM, each one of the data collection activities included a component on inter-agency collaboration, and one of the activities consulted the partners directly. Hence, in-depth interviews were carried out individually with 32 partners coming from the public and community sectors of health, social and justice services.

**Table I** Overview of the data collected, year 1: diagnostic of police practices and needs

Types of activities	Data collection activities	Focus:		
		documenting Practices	Needs	Sources
Documentary research	1. Scientific literature review <sup>a</sup>	X		125 reviewed articles
	2. Summary of practices and governmental literature review <sup>b</sup>	X		35 reviewed texts
	3. Inventory of Canadian practices outside the SPVM <sup>c</sup>	X		46 police services
Data collection from participants	4. Online surveys <sup>d</sup>	X	X	661 respondents
	5. Police focus groups – neighbourhood police stations (NPS) <sup>e</sup>	X	X	10 groups in 2 NPSs (117 police officers)
	6. Police focus groups – investigation centres <sup>e, f</sup>	X	X	23 investigators
	7. Observing police intervention <sup>e, f</sup>	X	X	3 general, 2 older adult targeted
	8. Individual interviews – police officers <sup>e, f</sup>	X	X	6 police officers
	9. Individual interviews – partners <sup>e, f</sup>	X	X	32 representing organisations
	10. Identifying SPVM's best practices <sup>e, f</sup>	X	X	4 cooperation officers; 8 community relations officers – "older adult" mandate; 2 regional projects

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Research on 13 computer databases (5 in French and 8 in English). Out of the 362 articles reviewed from 2003 to 2014, an inter-judge validation from the summaries resulted in the selection of 125 relevant articles; <sup>b</sup>these texts come from four main sources: results from databases searches during the initial scientific literature review; referenced by an author within a scientific article; documents found through the inventory of Canadian practices; and specialised websites on policing and justice, such as the Community Oriented Policing Services, Home Office, National Institute of Justice and Australian Institute of Criminology. The majority of the 35 publications selected were from Canada (15) or the USA (16); <sup>c</sup>letters were sent to 130 Canadian police services, including 26 in Quebec. Research for information on police websites was also conducted. The focus was to collect data on all forms of police intervention related to elder abuse, including validated practices, if they existed; <sup>d</sup>conducted among all SPVM police officers who might intervene in situations involving seniors ( $n=2,172$ ) using the online survey platform Survey Monkey. A total of 661 questionnaires were completed for a response rate of 30.4 per cent. Given the limited time that several police officers have for online work, this can be considered as a good response rate; <sup>e</sup>case-study approach (two NPSs); <sup>f</sup>other NPSs or operation centres

### Data collection, years 2 and 3: evaluation of the model's pilot project

The realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) of the operational practice model implemented in the pilot project had two objectives: to understand if the implementation had worked and to identify the key elements that favoured or hindered this process; and to observe the model's effect on the SPVM's practices when intervening in cases of elder abuse. This double evaluation of the implementation phase and the consequential effects was necessary to identify elements which required reinforcement or adjustment, and to implement a finalised practice model within the entire police service. All officers and participating partners in both phases of the pilot project were involved in the quantitative and qualitative evaluation activities that were carried out during phase 1 (May-October 2015) and phase 2 (November 2015-February 2016) (see Table II). This second data collection also included an inter-agency component in order to, first, understand if the inter-agency responses implemented in the model responded to the needs identified, and second, to observe the model's effects on collaborative practices between police officers and their main partners. Each evaluation activity included a component on inter-agency collaboration, and one of the activities consulted partners directly. Two focus groups and two

**Table II** Overview of data collection, years 2 and 3: evaluation of the model's pilot project

Types of data	Evaluation activities	Number of collections	Number of participants
Qualitatives	1. Observation of: the launch, conference calls, operational committee meetings	19 observations	Impossible to assess
	2. Interviews with resource officers	12 interviews	6 resource officers
	3. Focus groups+interviews with partners	2 interviews+2 groups	8 participants
	4. Focus groups with local and regional SPVM's unit managers	2 interviews+2 groups	10 managers
Both	5. Resource officers' logbooks (local and regional)	30 logbooks	6 resource officers
Quantitatives	6. SPVM's intranet statistics	3 statistical reports	Does not apply
	7. Questionnaire for patrol officers	15 collections	138 patrol officers
	8. Questionnaire for investigators	3 collections	79 investigators

in-depth interviews were carried out with eight key partners from the public and community sectors of health, social and justice services.

The data obtained from the evaluation activities were interpreted such that the qualitative data were analysed through a thematic analysis (Mucchielli, 2004) and the quantitative data through descriptive statistics (Ness Evans, 1998). In order to gain a more comprehensive and a richer understanding of the findings generated by the varying data collection and analysis methods, the research team held a two-day seminar focussed on data triangulation (Mucchielli, 2004).

The evaluation activities during the second phase of the pilot project consisted of the observation of conference calls, operational committee meetings and the model's launch activities. Regarding the inter-agency component, an observation grid covered three main themes: how was the inter-agency component achieved during the model's implementation, the facilitative or hindering aspects, and the possible solutions or adjustments identified by participants to enhance collaboration. Questions were also asked by the research team during conference calls regarding these three themes. The answers were recorded, and thematic analysis was performed on the data. Apart from data collection no. 6, all data collection included questions on inter-agency collaboration.

## Findings

### *Main findings for data collection, year 1: diagnostic of police practices and needs*

Findings from documentary research and data collection from the participants regarding inter-agency and inter-professional collaboration will be presented. The two data collection activities carried out during the first 18 months of the IPRAS action research project identified inter-agency and inter-professional collaboration as a central element in the development of a police intervention model in cases of elder abuse. Police and external partners were employed to respond to the variables of the problem (public safety, legal protection, and physical, mental and social needs of older adults) and ensuring an effective response (Connolly, 2010; Ulrey and Brandl, 2012; White and Lawry, 2009). Health, social, legal and police services were presented, therefore, as essential partners in fighting and preventing elder abuse (Wiglesworth *et al.*, 2006). The data collected from Canadian police services, the SPVM officers and their partners demonstrated that partners are key contributors to elder abuse intervention.

With regards to the various practices in the context of this social problem, the literature reviewed states that some police services have set up specialised police units or coordinators to handle elder abuse cases (Fleischmann, 2010; White and Lawry, 2009). Police officers appointed as coordinators or unit leaders organise those involved and the activities associated with the stages of intervention. Specifically, they ensure a police presence within the community and develop and maintain partnerships between different organisations, resources and services. Furthermore, they facilitate communication between the police service and their partners. This role allows the development of knowledge and expertise in these specific cases. Having an adult protection specialist within a police service would foster the development of effective partnerships with other professionals, such as a coordinator of health and social services, and would allow for increased continuity and consistency in the follow-up of such cases (White and Lawry, 2009).

The role of coordinator and unit leader resembles a description of a "champion" practitioner in certain texts. This "champion" is identified as a professional capable of assuming a leadership role and encouraging the participation of different contributors to the collaborative process (Manthorpe *et al.*, 2010; Schneider *et al.*, 2010; Twomey *et al.*, 2010). In the literature reviewed, however, this role is often assumed by professionals in health care or social services. For example, two articles demonstrate cases where this position is assumed by a law enforcement officer (Otto, 2008) and a police assistant (Otto, 2005). Both examples take place in the USA and suggest that the champions' success in mobilising, and motivating inter-agency collaboration was mainly a result of their knowledge of elder abuse, their sensitivity to this issue and their visibility within their professional and community networks.

Consultation with SPVM police officers and their main partners highlighted that most of the collaborative work in prevention and the follow-up of cases relied on officers dedicated to

community relations. Their community-oriented mandate placed them in a privileged position to establish connections with local partners and facilitated, consequently, their knowledge and use of local agencies and services when working elder abuse cases. Health and social service professionals, both in public and community sectors, as well as patrol officers, identified them as the reference point when dealing with abusive situations. However, their mandate in terms of inter-agency and inter-professional work was not clearly defined and was variable from one NPS to another, depending on the reality and needs of the territory. Consulted partners expressed the desire to expand collaboration beyond these officers. They found it vital to establish and maintain relationships with other officers working in the 32 local NPS, the four investigation centres and the SPVM headquarters.

However, findings highlighted that police participation in inter-agency practices did not lack challenges. This can be mainly explained by frequent staff turnover (Twomey *et al.*, 2010), multiple statutory responsibilities on different fronts (Reid *et al.*, 2009) and the fact that the types of abuse older adults are subject to – such as neglect or financial abuse – present a challenge with regards to the collection of evidence and initiating investigations (Connolly, 2010; Manthorpe *et al.*, 2010; Schneider *et al.*, 2010). Intervention in cases of non-criminal abuse was another challenge highlighted by SPVM participants. These situations remained a critical issue for the officers who felt poorly equipped to intervene due to their limited potential for action: they could not enforce the criminal code and they did not have clear guidelines in terms of what to do and where to refer such cases.

A lack of knowledge about organisations and services in the area was another challenge highlighted by police officers who had difficulty referring the public elsewhere. Partners also stressed the necessity to improve the awareness of the roles and limitations between themselves and the police officers of different functions in order to facilitate collaboration, especially in non-criminal cases. They suggested that barriers to collaboration derived from a “clash of perspectives” due to varying practice cultures, ideologies and objectives could be broken down by fostering the opportunity to get to know one another better. Joint training sessions on elder abuse and the role of different players were the main solutions proposed. Scientific literature also stressed the importance of joint training and emphasised the need to develop inter-agency working protocols that include guidelines on the exchange of information and evidence collection practices (Connolly, 2010; Manthorpe *et al.*, 2010; Nerenberg, 2006; Williams, 2011).

Finally, sharing information and confidentiality practices stood out as critical issues which limited the potential for effective concerted response to the detection and follow-up on cases, especially between the police and health and social services (Blowers *et al.*, 2012; Reid *et al.*, 2009; Stiegel, 2006). This difficulty has also been associated with frequent police staff turnover that prevents continuity of police representatives in inter-agency teams and would consequently, despite preserving confidentiality, hinder the sharing of information which is necessary to the decision-making process (Twomey *et al.*, 2010). The majority of the partners (participants in data collection no. 9 in year 1 and no. 3 in year 2) felt that the collaboration was effective with regards to prevention, but stressed that confidentiality and the reluctance of seniors to report their abuse continued to be a barrier, particularly with detection and following up with those involved.

### ***Identified needs and responses***

The analysis of previous findings identified three major needs required in order to fulfil the IPRAS Model and inter-agency collaboration: foster dialogue between partners and a better understanding of their respective contributions; promote better communication between the police and the network of health and social services (mitigate barriers for sharing information); and develop and strengthen the operational relationships with partners. The operational practice model implemented through the pilot project included concrete actions aimed at responding to these three inter-agency needs. The goal was to test these actions in the field, assess their relevance and perform the required adjustments. These concrete actions will be presented, followed by the evaluation findings and adjustments.

The first action of the model regarded informal collaboration agreements with main local, regional and headquarter partners. In practice, that led the SPVM to discuss and agree on ways to

facilitate joint intervention in criminal and non-criminal abuse situations with three key partners of the local and regional units in the pilot project: community-based organisations with an older adults mandate; public health and social services centres; and the Crime Victims Assistance Center (CAVAC), working mainly with regional investigation units. Regarding the CAVAC, the agreement included a follow-up for older adults who were victims of non-criminal forms of abuse (such as many forms of verbal abuse).

The second action aimed to expand the inter-agency responsibility beyond the community relations officers. A coordination structure for managing elder abuse cases within the SPVM was therefore created. This structure was developed in accordance with the intervention levels already in place in the police service (local, regional and headquarter). Inspired by the role of coordinators and the “champions” derived from the consulted scientific literature, “resource officers” were appointed within each level and their role was defined regarding inter-agency collaboration. Therefore, there are now 37 specialised officers.

The third action was the development of an operating mode (OM), an internal document providing guidelines to police officers in their intervention with older adults living an abusive situation. The necessity of clear guidelines on elder abuse cases, particularly on non-criminal cases was unanimous among scientific literature and data collection. By using an existing OM from conjugal and intra-family violence as reference, the SPVM was able to adapt it for intervening with abused elders in a format already familiar to officers. This document offered basic definitions related to elder abuse and described the roles of officers from different functions called to intervene with abused elders (patrol officers, investigators and resource officers). Aside from this information, the appendix section presented tools for facilitating collaborative practices which were developed from the model’s responses. In order to promote and help the acquisition of knowledge and the use of local agencies and services, a detection pocket tool for police officers was designed with a space in the back cover for writing the contact information of partners available in the area. To facilitate sharing information, while respecting confidentiality rules, an authorisation form was adapted to the older adult population, which allows the exchange of nominal information to another agency. Finally, an intervention procedure or “flowchart” was conceived to give clear practice guidelines to police officers regarding criminal and non-criminal abuse situations. The latter established the writing of reports as mandatory in all situations, whether criminal or non-criminal. In the case of a non-criminal situation, officers were required to refer to their partners; in criminal situations, the SPVM evidently kept playing the lead role in strengthening their partners’ collaboration.

### ***Main findings of data collection, years 2 and 3: evaluation of the model's pilot project***

*Facilitating elements.* The pilot project allowed the SPVM to reinforce collaborative practices with its main partners and to mobilise new ones. Pre-existing links with key partners before the project’s implementation and the inclusion of their viewpoints and needs for the development and testing of the model greatly facilitated improvement. The discussion of informal collaboration agreements allowed to re-open the dialogue with partners in order to reassess priorities and find better ways of working together, particularly in response to non-criminal abuse. It proved to be extremely useful to clearly define the roles of officers and their partners, as well as the desired collaboration methods. At the end, it minimised overlapping intervention and follow-ups and, thus, reduced the risk of overloading officers with work. The implementation of the model, on the other hand, helped pique the interest of other potential partners – notably from the judicial sector – into working together with the SPVM. It is important to highlight the openness and interest with which partners from all sectors received the project and the importance they accorded to figuring out ways to work together, especially in non-criminal cases.

Established or reinforced relationships between personnel from the public sector and community-based services strengthened intervention practices implemented in teams of two (police officers and public or community-based practitioners) and teams of three (police officers as well as public and community-based practitioners). Although not formally part of the model’s actions, intervention in dyads or triads was considered a way of reinforcing the partnership approach in certain neighbourhoods. Extending the invitation to the partners of local units (NPS)

was another valued practice to enhance partnerships. It allowed a better understanding of the role and contribution of both parties working in the same area. It also encouraged patrol officers to play a more active role in making direct case referrals to partners – without having to go through the resource officer – avoiding centralisation of all inter-agency work and preventing work overload for the resource officer. In addition, working in triads proved to make follow-ups more effective. The complementing viewpoints and approaches of the different professionals working together allowed a wider understanding of the situation and encouraged better-informed and adequate responses to meet the needs of older adults.

Working in partnerships was also enhanced by other practices that allowed the identification of a contact person within the police service and agencies. The designation of local, regional and corporate (or headquarter) resource officers as part of the coordination structure saved time and avoided partners' confusion when contacting the SPVM regarding elder abuse cases. The participation of resource officers in local or regional inter-agency coordination bodies referred to as coordination committees on elder abuse, although not a part of their role as described in the OM, stood out as an important strategy to enhance collaboration. In addition, the findings showed that this practice was well established in Québec, where the vast majority of police services consulted were members of coordination committees in their area. It resulted as an effective way to meet and establish links with various partners in the community and to diversify the network of contacts and resources. It also helped to update the list of local partners regularly.

The process of choosing resource officers was greatly facilitated due to the existing knowledge and experience of the SPVM officers with respect to intervention with older adults. They also shared other characteristics that made their profile suitable for the role: interest in working with older adults and sensitivity to the problem of elder abuse; ability to establish good working relationships with colleagues and with partners from different sectors; teaching, coaching and animation skills; and concern for continuous improvement. Resource officers played a key role in promoting the model to patrol officers, investigators and partners, and bringing them on board. Aside from their natural talents for the role, their selection and involvement in the early development of the pilot project allowed them to be better prepared to assume their new mandate.

Sharing the same working space proved to be another facilitating factor of inter-agency practices. In regional units, CAVAC professionals, investigators and the designated regional resource officer were located in the same building. This physical proximity favoured inter-professional contact, communication and helped improve the coordination of complementary tasks. Access of CAVAC's professionals to the investigators' weekly meetings (15-minute meetings to exchange information related to cases) was also considered as a facilitator of collaborative work as it allowed the sharing of relevant information in joint cases and the emergence of new ideas for intervention.

*Challenges encountered in practice and adjustments made to the practice model.* A major issue affecting inter-agency work during the pilot project was the organisational changes and staff turnover within the SPVM and the public sector of health and social services. The project coincided with a period of internal restructuring of these organisations posing the challenge of maintaining continuity with regards to the common understanding of approaches and practices and demanding an ongoing effort to identify key partners. Despite progress in initiating and continuing partnerships, thanks to time commitment and constant efforts, work remains to be done to strengthen these links and to promote a better bilateral exchange of information. Organisational changes and staff turnover also took place within partnering agencies, though smaller in scale. By analysing this common reality, it became clear that it was important to maintain a regular update of local, regional and headquarters partners and the resources available for older adults. The importance of building on inter-agency partnerships which transcend relations between professionals and are more sustainable in the long term was also highlighted. Adjustments to the practice model aimed at the creation of spaces to expand links between police officers and partners from different intervention territories (local, regional and headquarters) and organisational levels (directors, managers and field professionals). By the inter-agency and coordination nature of their role, resource officers received the mandate of keeping an updated list of resources and making it available to the officers of their units.

In this regard, given that resource officers were designated as the focal point of partnership coordination, a close attention was paid to the description and application of their role. The objective was to understand if it seemed realistic to them and if it clearly stated their mandate. The evaluation results highlighted the need to clarify and be precise with regards to the corporate resource officer's role. The inter-agency corporate mandate was a novelty for the police service, in comparison with the local and regional levels that already consisted of experienced officers in elder abuse who maintained – in a non-formal way – relations with external partners. The corporate resource officer's role was then adjusted to describe the mandate clearly and to placing particular emphasis on the establishment and strengthening of collaborations with partners from the judiciary sector.

Concerning specific collaborative practices that took place during the pilot, team intervention in dyads or in triads proved to be highly valued by resource officers. However, noticing different approaches from one unit to another, officers expressed the need to clarify and better frame the desired practice within the SPVM. Members of the operational committee thus developed an "analysis chart" that gave a better definition of the police and the partners' roles, collaboration proceedings and the exchange of information and resources (infrastructure and patrol vehicles). It also addressed pitfalls to avoid work overload of the resource officers and any overlapping follow-ups. A knowledge transfer activity involving police officers and partners from the northern region was also organised to explore both the roles and contributions of different actors and to discuss better ways of working together.

Another challenge identified by police officers concerned the time management skills required to establish and maintain partnerships. Establishing a collaborative and trusting relationship can be time consuming, especially if one of the partners (police or other) has limited experience on elder abuse cases or is not yet familiar with the territory or area of intervention. On the other hand, the number of joint follow-ups in abuse cases can sometimes be greatly restricted due to the nature of interventions with older adults that demand a significant time investment. In addition, incompatibility of schedules and high workload of partners and police officers posed a challenge to plan dyad or triad team work. Resource officers of local and regional units identified that fixing a weekly timeframe to work with their partners was one of the best ways to ensure the necessary synergy to advance in cases and maintain the partnership. Officers and partners involved in the pilot project adopted this approach establishing a joint working day or a half day, according to their work schedules and caseload.

The last major challenge encountered concerned communication and the sharing of information, particularly between the police and public health and social services. Two legal opinions elaborated by the legal counsellors of the SPVM were disseminated to guide police officers. The first one addressed the exchange of information and confidentiality, and the other concerned obtaining consent.

## Discussion

The emergence, development and sustainability of inter-agency practices, which include police participation, require implementing minimal conditions to insure their viability (Brandl *et al.*, 2007; Twomey *et al.*, 2010). The IPRAS model would not have been possible to develop and implement without, first, the engagement and mobilisation of the partners who participated in the project; and second, the support derived from national and provincial policy which recognised the importance of collaborative practices and which financially supported the project for its three-year duration.

It is necessary for those involved in the collaborative process to recognise, from the beginning, the importance of working together to counter elder abuse. Without this initial awareness to comprehend the "why" of joining forces, the common vision as to "how" to incite change will not emerge. This was a central point in developing the IPRAS model. Although organisational roles and objectives were divergent, the SPVM and its partners had a shared vision of the necessity to combine strengths and expertise to effectively prevent and respond to elder abuse situations. Their mutual and ultimate goal was clear: to ensure the well-being of older adults living in Montréal. As a result, the SPVM's management supported the project from its inception and invested human and material resources to ensure its advancement. Partner agencies also contributed the input of their practitioners and representatives to participate in the overall development of the model.

The second defining aspect of collaborative work is illustrated by the translation of their shared awareness into concrete investment from agencies and professionals in identifying and building collaborative work models that best respond to their territory and specific needs. This means investing human, material and financial resources. It demands a coordination effort and time investment from all involved (Government of Québec, 2016). And while not all agencies possess the same resources (Brandl *et al.*, 2007), it is certain that everyone is able to contribute somehow, even if just attending meetings and sharing their organisations' viewpoints and needs. The engagement and support from the organisations' management and leaders are crucial in this stage (Government of Québec, 2016).

Building common ground and investing resources is not, however, the exclusive responsibility of agencies and practitioners. Specific inter-agency policy frameworks and governmental financial support play a central role in the development and sustainability of collaborative initiatives (Ingram, 2011; Nakanishi *et al.*, 2009; Williams, 2011). Governmental action plans and policies must support and promote inter-agency approaches by giving clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of all actors and on protocols for developing inter-agency working models on municipal, provincial and national levels (Nakanishi *et al.*, 2009). These policies should shed some light on mechanisms for sharing information between sectors and agencies (Blowers *et al.*, 2012; Reid *et al.*, 2009; Daly and Jogerst, 2014; Stiegel, 2006) and should establish the financial support needed to develop and maintain collaborative initiatives (Daly and Jogerst, 2014; Nakanishi *et al.*, 2009). The Canadian and Québec Governments and policies, as previously stated, were key allies in the development of the IPRAS model.

Another essential condition for the viability of collaborative practices is the training offered to the various professionals involved. Scientific literature from the last decade states that problems related to differences of professional language, understanding of elder abuse, differing priorities and professional cultures, among others, can be rectified through a pedagogical framework which encourages and ensures that all participants share a mutual understanding (McGarry and Simpson, 2012). Initial and ongoing training on elder abuse is considered, therefore, as a major enabler for joint action. Outcomes of data collection and evaluation of the IPRAS model echoed these statements; knowledge transfer sessions among police officers of all functions and partners being consequently integrated to the intervention model as essential courses of action to facilitate and maintain collaboration in the long term. Basic training on elder abuse for new and experienced police officers was also prioritised in the model since the various actors involved in a collaborative effort cannot develop an inter-professional response unless they understand the roles, responsibilities, objectives and the legal context that frame their own practice (Stiegel, 2006). An online training module was developed with the SPVM's training department, and it was used by resource officers as a pedagogical tool in the various launch activities of the IPRAS model.

## Conclusion

The IPRAS model presented in this paper provides inspiration for the development of intervention models to counter elder abuse based on partnerships between police services, university research teams and practitioners. In the case of IPRAS, constructing a model derived from a collaborative approach permitted optimising police intervention in elder abuse cases. Police officers and partners pooling their strengths and responding as a team according to their respective fields of expertise allowed police to refocus on their primary mission, which is to ensure the safety of all citizens, including older adults. After an eight-month period of implementing the model within the pilot project, the scope of our evaluation was limited to the model's short-term effects on the SPVM police practice. Further evaluations of the model should be implemented, notably to assess its direct impact on older adults at risk of, or currently experiencing, situations of abuse.

### *Note on terminology*

Although scientific literature from the last decade emphasises collaborative work as an essential course of action to counter elder abuse, there lacks a uniformity in the terms used to describe it. For the purpose of this paper, the terms "inter-agency" and "inter-professional" are used in reference to organisations and professionals from different disciplines working together – with different levels of integration – to achieve a common objective.

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