GP responses to radicalisation and violent extremism:
what does the evidence say and what are the research gaps?

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Definitions

- **Radicalisation:** a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo.

- **Terrorism:** a consequence of such extreme ideals and is defined as 'any action… that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such act, by its nature and context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act'. Internationally, in the last year there has been an escalation in terrorist acts.

Wilner A, Dubouloz C J. Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: An interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace, and Security* 2015;**22(1):**33-51.

United nations, General Assembly 2004. *Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit*. https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/report.pdf

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) 2015. *Global Terrorism Database*. http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/

Current Theories

- Mental illness or psychopathy
- Social identity
- Socio-economic determinants
- Theological and ideological determinants

Theories of Mental Illness

- Early commentators proposing mental illness, sociopathy and psychopathy as risk factors for terrorist activity

- However, emotionally unstable individuals tend not to be recruited by terrorist organisations as they are usually deemed too much of a security risk

- However, there is a link between ill-health and some terrorist acts e.g.. individuals living in war zones commonly experience post-traumatic stress disorder, 'survivor's guilt' and bereavement of close friends or families

Post J. Terrorist psycho-logic: Terrorist behaviour as a product of psychological forces. In: Reich W, editor. *Origins of terrorism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 1990. p. 25-40.

Stoddard F J, Gold J, Henderson S W, Merlino J P, Norwood A, Post J M, et al. Psychiatry and terrorism. *J Nerv Ment Dis.* 2011; 199(8):537-543. Need to double check that BJGP accepts journal abbreviations (it will be on guidance to authors)

Speckhard A. *Talking to terrorists: Understanding the psycho-social motivations of militant jihadi terrorists, mass hostage takers, suicide bombers & 'martyrs'*. McLean, VA: Advances Press; 2012.

Individual Social Identity Determinants

▶ Identity issues play a pivotal role in the radicalisation process, with a need for belonging, purpose and meaning cited as significant motivators to join terrorist groups

▶ Young people undergoing transitions particularly vulnerable (e.g. moving schools, countries or simply going through maturation)

Christmann K. Youth Justice Board, HM Gov 2012. *Preventing religious radicalisation and violent extremism: A systematic review of the research evidence, D144*. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf (accessed 29/05/2015)
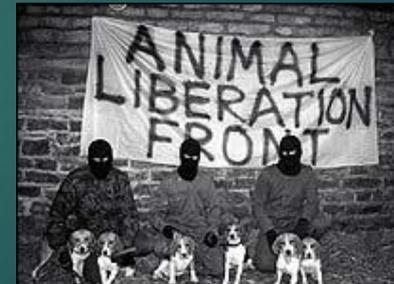
Bhui K, Everitt B, Jones E. Might depression, psychosocial adversity, and limited social assets explain vulnerability to and resistance against violent radicalisation? *PLoS One*. 2014;**9(9)**: e105918.

Wider socioeconomic determinants

Grievance can originate from diminished social cohesion, unstable political landscapes, socioeconomic disparities (real or perceived prejudice)

Ideology can be extremely varied e.g. animal rights versus religious

Victoroff J. The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches. *J Conflict Resolut*. 2005;**49(1)**:3-42

Bhui K, Warfa N, Jones E. Is violent radicalisation associated with poverty, migration, poor self-reported health and common mental disorders? *Plos one*. 2014;**9(3)**e90718.

Globalisation

A facilitator to terrorism through:

- Highlighting economic disparities between states

- Technological communication enabling cooperative terrorist activity by far-flung but like-minded conspirators

- Information transfer exposing people to worldwide events

Theories of Religious Terrorism

- **Fundamentalist Islamist ideology** (also described as ultra-orthodox, Wahabist, Salafist) as an aggrieved competitor with the market-economic, democratic, and secular trends of modernity

- **Christian extremism** – pro-life extremist violence against abortion providers – pro-life movement is a group of radicals that strikes out violently at women's clinics, doctors, nurses and healthcare workers providing abortions. Aryan nation is an anti-Semitic group and the action arm of the church of Jesus Christ – principles of the Christian identity movement with members denouncing Jews and blacks, claiming they are on the spiritual level of animals

- **Ultra-Zionists** – killing in the name of Jehovah

- **All such fundamentalist religions have the propensity for violence at certain points in history**

- Helps explain in part the recruitment of terrorists from affluent backgrounds where socioeconomic disadvantage not apparent

- Diaspora community identification with adverse events in their country of heritage

Post J. M. the mind of the terrorist: the psychology of terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda (2007)

Speckhard A. Talking to terrorists: Understanding the psycho-social motivations of militant jihadi terrorists, mass hostage takers, suicide bombers & 'martyrs'. McLean, VA: Advances Press; 2012.
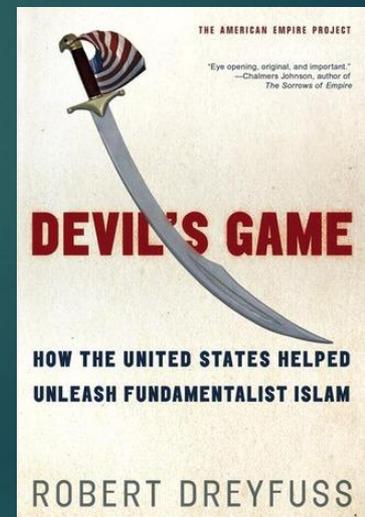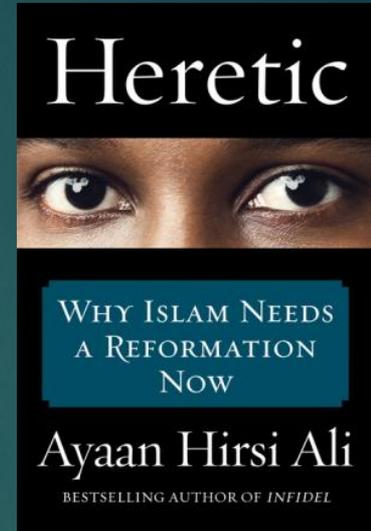
Keys-Turner K D. The violent Islamic radicalization process: A framework for understanding [master's thesis on internet]. [Monterey, California]: Naval Postgraduate School; 2011. http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a556429.pdf (accessed 14/05/2015)

McGregor I, Hayes J, Prentice M. Motivation for aggressive religious radicalization: goal regulation theory and a personality, threat, affordance hypothesis. Front. Psychol. 2015;6(1325).

Polarised opinions in the lay literature

Ayaan Hirsi Ali *Heretic* "Islam is not a religion of peace....Ensure that Muhammad and the Qur'an are open to interpretation and criticism"

Robert Dreyfuss *Devil's game: how the United States helped unleash fundamentalist Islam* – "There is an unwritten chapter in the history of the Cold War and New World Order that followed. It is the story of how the United States – sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly – funded and encouraged right-wing Islamist activism"

Malala…

Malala Yousafzai Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pakistani schoolgirl:

The extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. The power of the voice of women frightens them. That is why they are blasting schools everyday – because they were and are afraid of change, afraid of the equality that we will bring to our society. They think that God is a tiny, little conservative being who would send girls to hell just because of going to school

Malala Yousafzai Our Books and our pens are our most powerful weapons: address to the United Nations. *Guardian* July 12, 2013 (NEEDS WEBSITE)
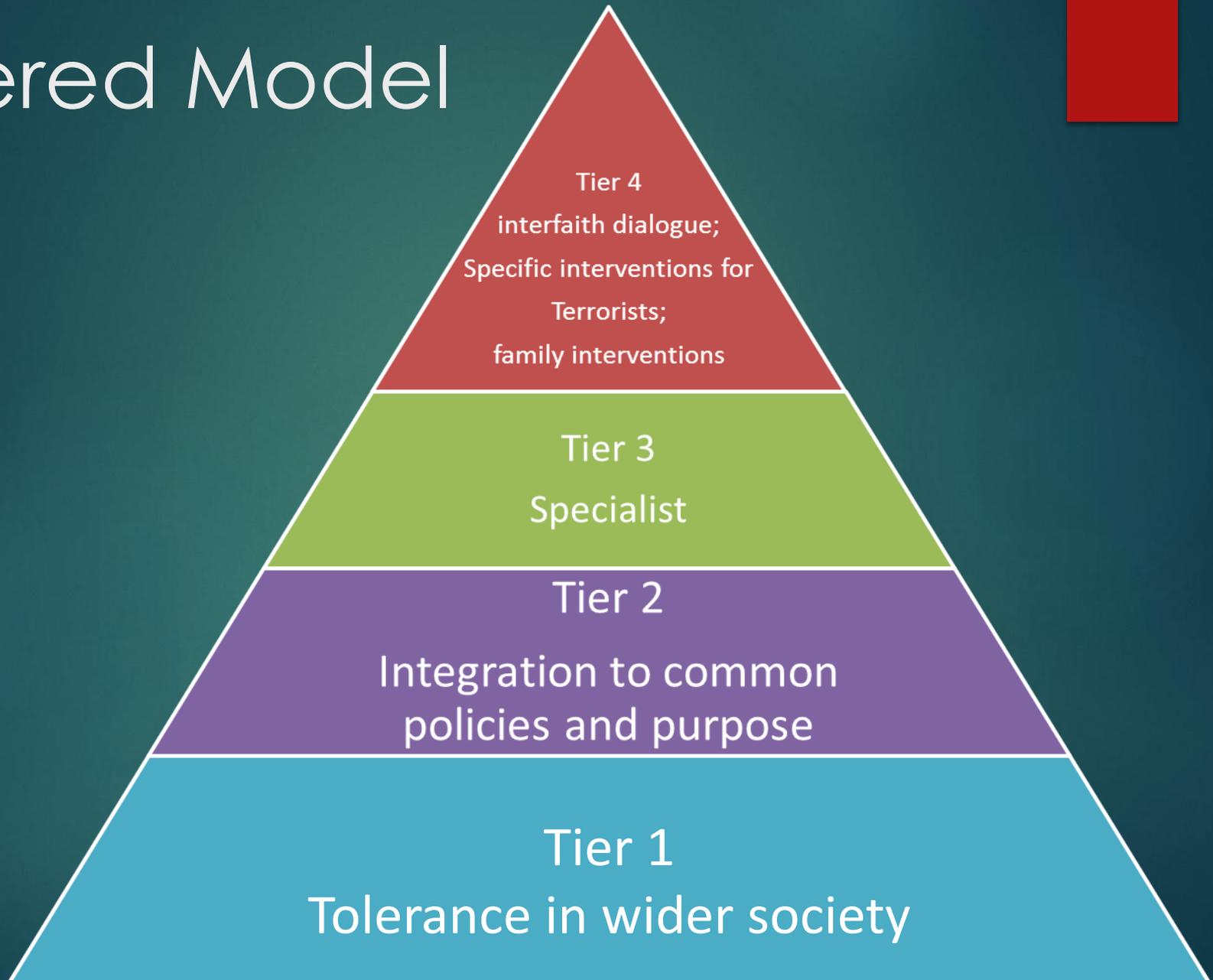
Far right white supremacist extremism

- In the UK this movement has had great success in spreading their messages across websites

- Encourage racially motivated violence - believe in the superiority of one race over another

- Hate speech, hate crime

- White supremacy is a system and a set of processes whereby whites have power and social dominance. In effect, 'whiteness' becomes a 'white superiority' – (Bonnett, 1997)

- 'Them' and 'us' ideology on the basis of skin colour, religion, cultural, ethnic or national origin

What can we recommend?

▶ Complex religio-psychosocial phenomenon

▶ Prevent Strategy – centrally driven

▶ Local Strategy - ? Tiered response with wide representation from health (clinical and public), ?public order (police and prison), ?faith groups

Tiered Model

Tier 4
interfaith dialogue;
Specific interventions for
Terrorists;
family interventions

Tier 3
Specialist

Tier 2
Integration to common
policies and purpose

Tier 1
Tolerance in wider society

Workshop

- What is your professional background and if you have worked in prisons, can you tell us how long for?

- **To what extent do you think healthcare professionals should be involved in countering the risk of terrorist activity? E.g. any resistance to it and if so, why? Potential of involvement?**

- What roles, if any, do you think you should incorporate into your daily job as a prison clinician, to help with counter-extremism / preventing radicalisation?

- What should you incorporate into your capacity, caring for prisoners convicted of violent extremist offences?

- How do you think you should engage with prisoners convicted of violent-extremist offences?

- **To what extent do you feel healthcare professionals are both competent and confident in their clinical activity involving radicalised prisoners (e.g. risk of grooming; understanding grievances; providing impartial clinical treatment)?**

- What do you understand by the term 'radicalisation'?

- What would you consider to be your level of knowledge regarding radicalisation?

- What do you consider to be early warning signs of possible radicalisation?

- How easy or difficult do you think it is or would be to engage with prisoners convicted of violent-extremist offences in the above ways (based on past clinical practise experience)?

- Have you ever had any experiences of tension or conflicts of interest between your typical health care duties and responsibilities whilst complying with the government's counter-terrorism strategies (e.g. maintaining patient confidentiality versus acting as an 'informant')? How were these issues resolved, if at all? How did it leave you feeling on a personal and professional level? Implications?

- **For those of you who complete prevent training, do you have any suggestions for further development?**

- Have you accessed Prevent Training? If yes, what improvements do you feel could be made to the training?

- Please provide two key 'take home messages' which you took from the training.

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