TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE ACROSS THE LIFESPAN: A NURSING PERSPECTIVE

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Objectives

• Understand circumstances that may cause trauma to an individual
• Discriminate trauma etiology as a foundation for presenting symptoms
• Establish trauma-informed interventions when providing treatment for individuals
DISCUSSION
What Is Trauma?¹

| Experienced by an individual | As physically or emotionally harmful or threatening | Has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, emotional, social or spiritual well-being |

What Is Trauma-informed Care?¹

An approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives.

Examples: Common Causes of Trauma

- Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or assault
- Neglect
- Natural or manmade disasters
- Serious illness, or medical procedures
- Victim or witness to domestic or community violence
- Traumatic grief or separation

DISCUSSION
Considerations for Screening and Assessment

- Ask all clients about a possible trauma history: discern psychological symptoms, mental disorders, suicide risk
- Use validated trauma assessment instruments as part of initial treatment planning
- Recognize that some individuals will not make a connection between trauma and their current behavior patterns
- Focus assessment on how trauma symptoms affect the person’s current functioning
- Consider using a paper-and-pencil or drawing instruments rather than verbal descriptions of traumatic events
- Facilitate a mutual discussion of assessment findings for subsequent treatment planning
- Ensure the person is emotionally safe and grounded before he or she leaves the interview room

Examples Of Manifestations Of Trauma In Children & Adolescents

**Young Children**
- Generalized fear
- Nightmares
- Heightened arousal and confusion
- Physical symptoms, (e.g. stomachaches, headaches)

**School-age Children**
- Aggressive behavior and anger
- Regression to behavior seen at younger ages
- Repetitious traumatic play
- Loss of ability to concentrate
- Worse school performance

**Adolescents**
- Depression and social withdrawal
- Rebellion
- Increased risky activities such as sexual acting out
- Wish for revenge and action-oriented responses to trauma
- Sleep and eating disturbances

Examples Of Manifestations Of Trauma In Adults & Older Adults

Adults
- Sleep problems,
- Increased agitation,
- Hypervigilance,
- Isolation or withdrawal,
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

Older Adults
- Increased withdrawal and isolation,
- Reluctance to leave home,
- Worsening of chronic illnesses,
- Confusion, depression, and fear

Examples Of Trauma-Informed Interventions

Create a safety plan

Allow clients to tell their story (what happened)

Address the consequences of the trauma

DISCUSSION
Case Study: Louise (History)\textsuperscript{1}

- Louise is a 34 year old divorced female diagnosed with PTSD and depression.
- She was molested by father from age 7 to 17.
- She was in an abusive relationship from age 19-30.
- During this time, Louise was physically, emotionally and sexually abused by the husband.
- In the last event, her ex-husband shot her right hand as Louise was trying to get her son away from the ex-husband.
- Subsequently, Louise lost half of her hand.
- Louise has one son, now 19, who is currently incarcerated for possession of drugs.

\textsuperscript{1} Information derived from the professional clinical experience of the presenters; the name is fictional.
Case Study: Louise (Recent Events)

• Louise got involved in a relationship with a very caring and concerned man; they eventually had a daughter together and married.

• Louise continues to have issues with PTSD over time.

• Louise’s main concern now is for her daughter because of the trauma.

1. Information derived from the professional clinical experience of the presenters.
DISCUSSION
Take Away Message

Working with patients across the lifespan with histories of trauma requires sensitivity, advocacy, and compassion.
CLOSING