ENHANCING EMS SAFETY THROUGH UNDERSTANDING PATIENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

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Pulse Check 2019
Objectives

• Defining Mental Illness

• The dynamics of violence.

• Creating and maintaining a safe patient care environment.

• How to recognize and deal with hostile aggressive patients using Verbal De-escalation as a nonviolent response.
• Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (46.6 million) experiences mental illness in a given year.

• Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. (11.2 million) experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

• Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%.
Staggering Statistics

Facts about Mental Health in the US (Number of People in 2014)

- 2.400.000: Diagnosable Mental Disorder
- 23.900.000: Anxiety disorders
- 21.000.000: Depression
- 40.000.000: Schizophrenia
- 61.500.000: Illicit drug use
What is Mental Illness?

A mental illness is a condition that affects a patient's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day. Each patient will have different experiences, even patients with the same diagnosis.
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S/S of Borderline Personality Disorder

• An intense fear of abandonment

• A pattern of unstable intense relationships, such as idealizing someone one moment and then suddenly believing the person doesn't care enough or is cruel

• Rapid changes in self-identity and self-image that include shifting goals and values.

• Periods of stress-related paranoia and loss of contact with reality, lasting from a few minutes to a few hours
S/S of Borderline Personality Disorder

• Impulsive and risky behaviors, such as gambling, reckless driving, unsafe sex, spending sprees, binge eating or drug abuse, or sabotaging success by suddenly quitting a good job or ending a positive relationship

• Suicidal threats or behavior or self-injury, often in response to fear of separation or rejection

• Wide mood swings lasting from a few hours to a few days, which can include intense happiness, irritability, shame or anxiety
Prehospital Provider Training

We were all taught BSI. Is the Scene Safe?

What does “Is the Scene Safe” really mean?
Universal Precautions

In the 1990’s, OSHA developed Universal Precautions for Violence. This was part of the first official OSHA document related to Health Care worker safety:

**Violence** should be expected but can be avoided or mitigated through preparation.
Warning Signs of Increasing Anger/Violence

• Pacing and/or restlessness
• Clenched fist
• Increasingly loud speech
• Excessive insistence
• Threats
• Cursing
Does Your Kit Have **ALL** The Tools
Effective Communication Skills

1. Respect personal space – personal space will be greater with patients who are escalating.

2. Always talk to patients in a calm, respectful, compassionate and caring tone of voice.

3. Avoid power struggles. Remember that it is not about power and control, rather every interaction you have has therapeutic value.
4. Identify wants and feelings.

5. Be concise - don’t use long winded questions, or responses.

6. Consider focusing on the positive versus the negative.
Effective Communication Skills

HELLO
I AM...

A Good Listener
Non-Verbal Communication

- Facial expressions
- Body movement and posture
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Personal Space
Active Listening
Active Listening

Signs that you are actively listening:

• Remaining silent but asking questions or commenting as needed.
• If you are confused by what is meant/said, you can repeat back and clarify as needed...”Tell me if I have this right”...
• Maintaining eye contact.
• Giving them your undivided attention

Signs that you are most likely not actively listening:

• Talking to another patient or doing something else at same time (phone, text, etc.) the patient is talking to you.
• Cutting the patient off, interrupting them while they are talking.
• Assuming you know what they mean or are about to say, so you tune out
What’s the Difference

Empathy - referring to imagining or understanding how someone might feel, without necessarily having those feelings yourself.

Sympathy - referring to feelings or emotion, is used to describe when one patient shares the same feelings of another, such as when someone close is experiencing grief or loss.
Does Your Kit Have **ALL** The Tools

Non-Verbal Communication Skills
Verbal Communication Skills
Active Listening Skills
Convey Empathy
Convey Sympathy
Safety & Health Training

• Training is a critical component of any prevention strategy for First Responders, EMTS & Paramedics.

• Use Role Play as a tool when practicing mental health patient scenarios.

• Remember personal space, facial expressions, body movements and posture in order to nurture a safe prehospital provider and patient experience.
Thank You
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