Proactive Peer Support Training: COVID-19 Pandemic Behavioral Health Response

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Thank you for volunteering!
Agenda

- Unique challenges for healthcare workers in a pandemic
- Risk factors for psychological distress
- Providing support: 3 steps
- Psychological First Aid (PFA) just-in-time training
- Resources
- Self-care
What type of challenges?

- Proper use of PPE / infection control protocols
- Lack of organization and role clarity
- Changes in workflow and responsibility
- Limited resources/supplies
- Altered standards of care and ethical challenges ("moral injury")
- Separation from usual colleagues
- Death of patients - no family allowed
- Illness and death in colleagues
- Challenging team dynamics
- Fear of contracting the illness
- Concerns for safety of family and friends
- Feeling misunderstood; pressure to justify work
- Stress with re-entry to regular unit
- Stigmatization, lack of appreciation
- Fatigue and limited rest time
- Personal and team pressure to succeed in care of patients
- Self-doubt
Psychological distress

- Increased challenges → increased distress
  - Most healthcare workers are resilient and will not experience lasting distress.
  - However, depending on stress during the response, 10–20% of healthcare workers are at risk for a new disorder they didn't have before the event (based on research with disaster responders).
    - Post-traumatic stress
    - Insomnia
    - Alcohol/drug misuse
    - Depression
    - Anxiety
- Symptoms may appear after the outbreak is under control
- Symptoms usually decrease over time
- Relapses may occur, especially if:
  - Pre-existing mental health conditions
  - Re-exposure to additional infectious disease outbreaks
Risk factors for psychological distress

- Perception of heightened risk of infection
- Longer duration of high risk exposure
- Previous history of psychiatric illness
- Lack of social support
Phases of a disaster

Keep in mind the phase of the disaster and the expected reactions.
Providing Support: 3 Steps

1. Recognize the signs of distress in colleagues
   - Often these are the very things that push people away, such as irritability and withdrawal
Common reactions to stress

**Physical**
Back pain, muscle tension, stomach ache, headache, changes in appetite, sleep disturbance, fatigue, etc.

**Emotional**
Worry, irritability, sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, depression, guilt, mood swings, hopelessness, etc.

**Cognitive**
Difficulty concentrating, trouble remembering things, feeling confused, catastrophizing, etc.

**Behavioral**
Snapping at others, overworking, impulsivity, pacing, withdrawing, poor self-care, using drugs or alcohol more than usual, increased conflicts, etc.
Providing Support: 3 Steps

1. Recognize the signs of distress in colleagues
   ▪ Often these are the very things that push people away, such as irritability and withdrawal

2. Reach out - try to connect
   ▪ "How are things going?"
   ▪ "You seem stressed"
   ▪ “You don’t seem like your usual self”
   ▪ “Is there anything I can do to help?”

3. Listen, then try to come up with a plan
   ▪ What’s worked for them in the past
   ▪ Share what’s worked for you
   ▪ PiNS
   ▪ Supervisor
   ▪ Agree to check in again
PFA just-in-time training

Primary objectives

- Take emotional temperature
- Bring temperature of 8-10 down to 6-7
  - Unlikely to get down to 0-4 range
- Encourage action
- Encourage self-reliance
- Convey that they are not alone
- Provide information on common reactions to stress
- Convey that reactions are normal
PFA just-in-time training

Signs of trouble warranting referral

- Ongoing intrusions (nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts)
- Ongoing hyper-arousal (anxiety, insomnia, irritability, etc.)
- Avoiding reminders of a traumatic event
- Avoiding feelings by using substances
- Feeling numb, spaced out or like things aren’t real
- When daily functioning is affected
PFA just-in-time training

Making referrals

- Be cautious
  - Peers might feel stigmatized
  - Explain reasons carefully and respectfully
PFA just-in-time training

Dealing with anger

- Peers may be in the disillusionment phase
- Stay non-defensive
- Begin with a statement of empathy
  - “I’m sorry you're going through such a hard time.”
- Focus on what they can do, not what they can’t do
- Show respect
- When people are upset, consider switching temporarily to closed-ended (Yes/No) questions
Resources for Colleagues

- PiNS (Peers in Need of Support) program
  - 1:1 peer support from a behavioral health responder
  - **Not** formal evaluation or treatment
  - Support, listening, sharing resources, referrals if needed
  - Confidential (no records kept)
  - Email PINS@Nebraskamed.com
    - BH responder will reach out within 1 day

- Resilience workshops
  - 60-minute workshop to improve wellness and resilience
  - Tailored for healthcare workers responding to COVID-19 pandemic
  - Managers can request for a workgroup or team by emailing PINS@Nebraskamed.com
  - Can watch a recorded workshop here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep3n3kFWutU&feature=emb_logo
Resources for Colleagues (cont.)

- **Behavioral Health Connection**
  - Free service to help connect to behavioral health resources
    - Psychiatrists, therapists, support groups, etc.
    - M-F, 8 am – 5 pm, (402) 836-9292

- **Federal disaster distress helpline**
  - (800) 985 5990 or text 'talkwithus' to 66746
  - [http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov](http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov)
  - Confidential 24/7 for anyone experiencing distress due to a disaster

- **Arbor Family Counseling**
  - EAP for Nebraska Medicine and UNMC (5 free sessions)
    - 402-330-0960 or 1-800-922-7379
    - Arborfamilycounseling.com

- **Nebraska Medicine Psychiatry Department** - (402) 552-6007
  - Frontline providers prioritized for treatment

- **Nebraska Medicine Psychology Department** (402) 559-5031
  - Frontline providers prioritized for treatment
Resources for Colleagues (cont.)

Counseling Resources page of Nebraska Medicine Intranet

Recommended Resources (App and Web-based)

- Mindfulness/Anxiety Mobile Applications
  - Headspace
  - 10 percent happier meditation (use the gift code HEALTHCARE)
  - Insight Timer (free with thousands of guided meditations)
  - PTSD Coach (Not just for PTSD; Has numerous relaxation exercises in the Manage Symptoms – Tools section)
  - Mindfulness Coach
  - CBT-I Coach (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for insomnia)

- Mindfulness/Anxiety Websites
  - The BHECN Serenity Project – Free Yoga (UNMC)
  - Three 2-3 minute lessons on deep breathing (Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates)
  - 2 minute deep breathing lesson (Be the Change)
  - 3 minute body scan (UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center)
  - 5 minute body scan (The Sleepy Aardvark)

- Additional Resources
  - UNMC Wellbeing Symposium: Handling Stress in Uncertain Times (4/09/2020)
  - Educational resources for children at home (United Way of the Midlands)
  - Crisis Line and Mental Health Resources for Children and Teens (Boys Town)
  - Zoom support group for all medical personnel dealing with COVID-19 (free confidential support for nurses, medical assistants, doctors, etc.). Wednesdays 6-7 pm. Join: https://zoom.us/j/9050240002

- Tip Sheets:
  - Managing anxiety and stress (CDC)
  - Helping children cope with emergencies (CDC)
  - Self-care for emergency responders (and healthcare workers) (CDC)
  - Advice for newly remote workers (APA)
  - Coping with social distancing (APA)
  - Guide for Parents/Caregivers (NCTSN)
Resources for Peer Supporters

- Consult with a behavioral health professional
  - Email PINS@Nebraskamed.com
  - State you are **providing peer support** and would like a **consultation**
    - A BH pandemic responder will contact you within 1 day

- Additional resources in BH COVID-19 Response Teams site:
  - PFA just-in-time training
  - Handouts
## Resources

### Teams

- Ambulatory SOS
- Patient Experience Co...
- Daily Shout Out
- Psychiatry Access
- Community ED Call
- Joint Commission Rea...
- Ambulatory Clinic Back...
- Strategic Psychiatric Pl...
- Accreditation and Com...
- HICS Covid Command ...
- BH COVID-19 Response T...

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Taking Care of Yourself

- Find a buddy with whom to debrief / Access PiNS
- Connect with your social supports
- Use your own positive coping techniques
- Limit media consumption
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Exercise, eat well
- Get sufficient sleep
- Spend time outdoors