Importance of Trauma Informed Care for People Living with HIV

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TRAUMA INFORMED CARE FOR PLWH

Sally Jue, MSW
Objectives

- Describe the potential impact of trauma on HIV disclosure, ART adherence, HIV treatment and overall health outcomes
- Describe the 6 key principles of a trauma informed approach
- Identify 3 strategies or action steps that you can take to create a more trauma informed care approach with PLWH, your co-workers and your organization
Trauma

An event, series of events or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physical or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being

EVENT, EXPERIENCE, IMPACT
Forms of Trauma

**System-Induced and Re-traumatization**
- Child welfare, mental health, medical

**Historical**
- Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding from group traumatic experiences across generations or within a community
- Often accompanied by unresolved grief and anger
- Associated with racial/ethnic population groups suffering from major intergenerational losses and assaults on their culture and well-being

**Secondary/Vicarious**
- Affects service providers and other witnesses to others’ trauma
- Trauma symptoms resulting from prolonged exposure to clients’ trauma
- Witnessing violence in the workplace can increase trauma risks

SAMHSA 2016
Trauma and PLWH Overview

- PLWH exposed to high levels of trauma during childhood and adulthood at greater rates than experienced by the general population
- High rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) across geographic regions, particularly among women and MSM
- Syndemic effect of trauma and HIV associated with higher levels of depression, PTSD, anxiety and substance use
- Trauma, such as IPV, often a barrier to HIV status disclosure and accessing HIV care leading to poorer health outcomes

LeGrand, Reif & Murray, 2016
Trauma, HIV Risk and Clinical Outcomes

- Trauma associated with lower rates of ART adherence, increased viral load and virologic failure among PLWH (LeGrand et al 2016)
- Exposure to emotional abuse accelerated the expected rate of CD4 decline by 50-100% in ART-naïve HIV positive young women (Jewkes, Dunkle, Jama-Shai et al 2015)
- HIV status disclosure to a partner can trigger or increase IPV, particularly for women (LeGrand et al 2016)
- IPV led to non-adherence to prevention of mother-to-child transmission services, poor mental health and secondary HIV risk due to lack of relationship control (Hatcher, Woollett, Mokoatle et al 2014)
- History of sexual abuse in HIV-positive men linked to condomless anal intercourse with casual partners (Kamen, Etter, Flores et al 2013)
US Women Living with HIV and Trauma

■ Twice as often sexually abused as children
■ 55% report intimate partner violence, twice the national rate
■ Almost one third suffer from PTSD, 5x the rate of women in general
■ Experience more serious negative health effects regardless of whether HIV diagnosis occurred before or after the trauma
■ With recent trauma almost 4x more likely to have sex with someone whose HIV status they did not know and without using a condom

The Well Project, 2019
Effective Evidence Based Interventions for PLWH living with Trauma

- Only 2 control group studies for PLWH and trauma
- Both based on cognitive behavioral therapy approaches and techniques
Prolonged Exposure Study with PLWH

- 65 subjects were male and female
  - 45% African American, 29% white, 6% Hispanic and 7% multi-ethnic
  - 85% income less than $20k/year
  - 13 years on average, living with HIV

- Individual sessions twice weekly for 10 weeks, 90-120 min/session
  - Client selection of trauma to treat with 34% choosing HIV diagnosis as most distressing trauma

- Those receiving PE vs. control group reported
  - Significantly fewer trauma-related symptoms
  - Less negative PTSD thoughts
  - Improved end-state functioning sustained for 6 months

Pacella, Armelie, Boarts et al, 2012
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Based Coping Skills and Stress Management Group

- 253 adults included 91 males
  - All males identified as MSM
  - 68% African American, 16% Hispanic, 11% white and 4% other
  - 92% earned less than $20K/year and, on average, living with HIV for 10 years

- 15 weekly 90-minute group sessions led by therapists
  - Techniques included exposure, problem solving, communication skills, cognitive restructuring, skills building, relaxation, fostering safe environment

- CBT group showed:
  - Clinically significant reductions of intrusive and avoidance trauma-related symptoms
  - Greater reductions in avoidant coping
  - Significantly less alcohol and cocaine use at follow-up

Sikkema, Hansen, Tarakeshwar et al, 2007
Recommendations for Trauma-Informed Care for PLWH

- Provide training for administrative staff, doctors and clinic professionals at Ryan White service delivery sites to use trauma-informed approaches with clients and among staff.
- Require Ryan White programs to collect and report data on rates of IPV and PTSD symptoms – as well as more accurate data on rates of substance use, depression, stigma, and social isolation.
- Facilitate implementation and evaluation projects of trauma-informed primary care in at least 6 primary clinics serving women, including transgender women, living with HIV.
- Integrate evidence-based responses to PTSD into existing funded clinical services, including therapy, psychiatry, medication adherence and substance abuse treatment.
- Encourage collaborations between IPV CBO’s and trauma recovery centers, HIV and primary care clinics and AIDS service organizations.
- Look for demonstrated commitment to the above factors when assessing grantee applications.
NHAS 2017 Progress Report re: Trauma-Informed Care

- Office of Women’s Health
  - Promoted National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day via radio media tour and social media and HIV testing event in DC

- SAMHSA
  - 59 grantees in Targeted Capacity Expansion-HIV Program encouraged to “use a trauma informed approach following SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance”

- Administration for Children and Families
  - Supported development/dissemination of new resources on HIV and IPV with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence Against Women

- ACF, HRSA
  - Released HRSA Strategy to Address Intimate Partner Violence
  - Includes 27 activities for workforce training, partnership development, increasing access to quality healthcare and addressing knowledge gaps
Trauma Informed Approach: 6 Key Principles

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Peer Support
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Empowerment, Voice and Choice
- Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

SAMHSA Trauma & Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014
1. Safety

- Everyone in your organization feels physically and psychologically safe
- Understand safety as defined by those you serve
- Physical setting and interpersonal interactions promote sense of safety
- Policies and procedures help define and support physical and psychologically safety

What are you and your organization currently doing to create safety?
2. Trustworthiness & Transparency

- Organization operations and decisions conducted with transparency
- Leaders and staff committed to building and maintaining trust with each other, clients and family members, volunteers and others involved in the organization
- Set and share realistic expectations with staff, clients, family members and others involved—honor implicit and explicit promises made
- Model desired behaviors
3. Peer Support

- Importance of shared experience provides hope and positive role modeling
- Shared experience is authentic rather than assumed
- Reduces symptoms
- Increases social network, support systems and often friendships
-Contradicts negative messages received through trauma and service systems about who you are and your capabilities

Blanch, Filson & Penney, 2012
4. Collaboration and Mutuality

- Partnering with clients as equals
- Leveling power differences between staff and clients and among organization’s employees
- Models healing in relationships via shared power and decision-making
- Organization supports and equips everyone to actively participate in creating a trauma-informed environment
5. Empowerment, Voice & Choice

- Strengths and resilience based approach with everyone
- Commitment to healing and recovery from trauma
- Operations, workforce development and services all organized to foster client and staff empowerment
- Everyone equipped to participate equally in shared decision-making, choice and goal setting
- Staff are facilitators, not controllers, of recovery and cultivate self-advocacy skills
- Staff and clients operate under a parallel process to sustain a trauma informed workplace culture
6. Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues

- Organization and individual staff manage and move past biases and stereotypes

- The Organization
  - Provides culturally competent, gender responsive services
  - Leverages healing value of traditional cultural connections
  - Integrates cultural competence and gender responsiveness into its policies, procedures and processes
  - Recognizes and addresses historical trauma
SO WHY OR HOW DOES ALL OF THIS WORK?
SHORT CUT THINKING

- Survival based
- Faster
- More efficient
- Meaning over details

DEFAULT SETTING

TRIGGER + REACTION = HARD WIRING
The Remarkable Human Brain

- More exposure to certain associations lead to them becoming more hard-wired.
- Frequent new associations or brain maps can eventually create strong alternate wiring and responses.
- Strong emotional associations accelerate and amplify the wiring process.
So What?

In trauma informed environments:

- Every encounter is a rewiring opportunity
- Immersion amplifies impact
- Safety and trust facilitates greater risk taking to try new approaches and responses
- Shared decision making builds skills and confidence
- Transition planning better equips people for independence

THE EXCEPTION BECOMES THE NEW NORM
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- Identify the principle your organization/program does best. Share a few ways you are executing that principle.
- What principle needs to be strengthened? What concrete actions could your organization take to strengthen that principle?

SAMHSA Trauma & Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014
reminder: ✅ take care of yourself!

Be there for others, but never leave yourself behind.

-Dodinsky

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