THE EFFECTS OF MENTAL ILLNESS, GRIEF & VIOLENCE ON AFRICAN-AMERICANS

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Positive Mental Health

• Capacity to give and receive love
• Ability to work
• Spirituality or belief in a higher power
• Social support network
• Optimism
• Healthy coping resources
“Of all of the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane”

Dr. Martin Luther King, 1966
Background- Scientific Racism

- Benjamin Rush, M.D.- “Negritude”- cure was deliverable because “eliminating black skin would eliminate enslavement because he blacks themselves preferred ‘white skin’ (1796)
- Samuel Cartwright, M.D.-Blacks had physical and mental defects which required medical supervision & smaller brain craniums (1848)
- Tuskegee Study of Syphilis in the Untreated Negro Male (1932-1972)- 600 patients & their families were denied treatment to trace the disease
Background-Social Injustice

- History-Forced Slavery
- Criminal Justice System
- Unequal Wages
- Institutional Racism
- Racial Discrimination
- Unequal Access to Education, Healthcare
Unequal Treatment

- Access to mental health care is $\frac{1}{2}$ that of whites
- Fewer Psychotherapy Treatment Sessions
- Lack of prescription drug use for individuals with depression, schizophrenia & bipolar disorder
- Lack of best practices for prescribing

“Disparities exist in the receipt of any mental health care and expenditures”

(Journal of Health Policy Economics, 2013: March 16(1) pp 3-12)
Psychological Impact of Racism

- Shapes society ‘understanding’ of status, power, stereotyping, social stratification
- Alters Life chances and Life experiences of young black children
- Can lead to a feeling of self-inferiority & self-hatred
- Limits expectations
- Negative feelings can be internalized
- Can impair healthy relationships with a significant other
“Fear in the neighborhood”
Mental Health In African-Americans

- Race & Ethnicity
- Socio-cultural Determinants—poverty, racism & discrimination, unemployment, exposure to violence
- Chronic Medical Conditions
- Barriers to Access & Underutilization of Mental Health Services
- Exposure to Trauma
- Distrust of Providers
- Stigma
Lifetime Prevalence of Psychiatric Disorders

- **Lower** lifetime likelihood than non-Hispanic Whites of having any Axis I Disorder, alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, drug abuse, MDD or panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, GAD
- Axis II-higher likelihood of Schizoid Personality DO, Paranoid Personality DO, OCD Personality DO
- However, greater impact on functioning because of lower treatment rates, poorer quality of treatment
Risk Factors for Depression

• Gender
• Race/Ethnicity
• Having a parent who was depressed
• Chronic stress/life events
• Poverty
• Chronic Health Problems
• Marital Status
• Internalized Racism
“The Blues”

- Non-specific sadness
- Feel down or depressed
- Change in sleep/appetite/sex
- More irritable
- “sick and tired of being sick and tired”
Major Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest in hobbies
- Decreased energy, feeling fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating, memory
- Appetite loss and/or weight loss
- Thoughts of suicide, and/or suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability

DX: Duration, Impact of Functioning, 5 of these every day
Screening for Depression
PH Q-2

• During the past month, have you often been bothered by:
  • Little interest or pleasure in doing things?
    ○ Yes ○ No
  • Feeling down, depressed or hopeless?
    ○ Yes ○ No

A yes to either question then refer to a mental health professional for an evaluation of symptoms
Depression in Black Men

• Higher burden of preventable morbidity & mortality
• Issues of sexual identity development, higher rates of mood disorder in gay/bisexual men
• Increased exposure to racism & discrimination, violence, poverty which impact mental health, and lead to increased psychological distress
• College educated black men -4x more likely to be unemployed, lower levels of wealth
• Limited research/data
• Consistent relationship with racism as a risk factor
• Increase in suicide rates 133% -black males (15-19) & 24% (20-24) (the years of 1979-1997)
Challenges

- Psychology of being Black & Female
- Impact of Multiple Roles
- Psychological Stress & Physical Health
• Biopsychosocial Process
• Stress Experiences of African-American Women
  • Superwomen Schema
  • Strong Black Women Script
  • Strength—both health Supportive & Compromising

RX: Self-awareness, Self-care, Inter and Intrapersonal Restorative healing and Redefinition of inner strength

*Complementary Health Practice Review, 2010 December 14, (15)3: 115-131, Cheryl L. Woods-Giscombe*
PTSD

- Exposure to a traumatic event
- Feel fearful, horrified or helpless
- Re-experience, avoidance, hyper-arousal
- Risk for increased suicide, substance dependence
- Decline in role functioning
- Marital Instability
PTSD

- Higher prevalence in African-Americans
- Risks-higher rates of exposure to mortality & crime victimization
- Child maltreatment
- Witnessing Domestic Violence
- Work Related Events
- Largely untreated in African-Americans
Intimate Partner Violence

- Public Health Concern
- Black women (43.7%) affected vs. White Women (34.6%)
- Worse physical health & mental health outcomes
- Higher risk of IPV homicide
- Barriers feeling that violence is “normal not that serious”
- Lack of access to resources, feelings of shame, fear
What is Stress?

“nonspecific response of the body to any demand placed upon it”

Hans Selye (1926)
Stress

Acute
- Perceived threat
- Change
- “Flight or fight”
- Deadlines
- Temporary

Chronic
- Unrelenting
- Constant state of anxiety, nerves
- Physiologic changes in your body
- ↑ glucose, ↑ heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, ↑ abdominal fat
Chronic Stress and Your Body

- Cardiovascular Disease
- Depression
- Infections
- Obesity
- Healing
- Sleep Patterns
Effect of Community Violence on Child/Adolescent Development

- **Factors related to violence:**
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Age of Exposure

- **Process**
  - Witness to violence
  - Early childhood aggressive behavior
  - Academic Problems
  - Rejection by Peers
  - Spending time with Deviant Peers

*Academic Readiness in the First Grade-protective*
Mass Incarceration

• Correlation with untreated mental illness, high rates of physical and sexual trauma
• Blacks constitute 80-90% of offenders in 7 states
• Admitted at 20-57x higher rates than whites in 15 states
• 26 x higher prison admissions since 1983
• Numbers are NOT explained by crime rates
• Identical percentages of black & white seniors smoke marijuana
• White youth ages 12-17 are more than a third more likely to have old illegal drugs

(The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander, 2011)
Grief

- **Loss** - natural, universally expected, leaves one feeling isolated & emotionally disrupted
- **Bereavement** - experienced after losing someone close
- **Grief** - psychological response to bereavement
- **Mourning** - response to bereavement, indefinite grief, deal with living in the world without a loved one
- **Complicated Grief** - occurs in 7% of the population, “takes hold and won’t let go”, severe impairment in functioning
Looking forward…

- Promotion of Fatherhood & involvement
- Happiness of Expectant mothers
- Incorporate & teach “seizing control of health” as masculinity and perceptions of power
- Teach providers to construct life stories of resilience
- Earlier intervention/prevention for children subject to violence/trauma
- Importance of routine physical examinations
- Intensive follow-up after crisis/trauma exposure
- Demand culturally sensitive & professional engagement by the health care system at every point of access
- Eliminate racism/bias in medicine
Who’s Taking Care of You?

Duke University Study, United Methodist Clergy, 2010

Forty percent were obese - only twenty-one percent were normal weight
Ten percent were depressed
Higher rates of diabetes, hypertension & arthritis

Underlying factors contributing to stress:
mobility
low pay
inadequate social support
high time demands
intrusion on family time

(www.faithandleadership.com)
Resources

LIFENET
(800) LIFENET or 311  www.800lifenet.com

National Black Women’s Health Imperative
www.blackwomenshealth.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
www.dbsalliance.org

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

Clergy Health Initiative
email:clergyhealth@div.duke.edu