Mental Health and the Elderly

2020 ELDER JUSTICE TRAINING

LORIE L. THOMAS LICSW
Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants will become familiar with common mental health concerns impacting older adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to differentiate between normal aging challenges and when to recommend professional help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants will understand the challenges of accessing services for older adults living with a mental health disorder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our aging population

More people are living longer
The population of older adults will double over the next 20 years
Many older adults report a satisfactory life
Healthier and wealthier than previous generations
Stereotypes of dependent, depressed, demented---incorrect
From Pyramid to Pillar: A Century of Change
Population of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>1960 Male</th>
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<th>2060 Male</th>
<th>2060 Female</th>
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Source: National Population Projections, 2017
www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html
In the next two decades the prevalence of people living with a mental health disorder is anticipated to increase from about 8 million to 14 million.

About 1 in 5 older adults have one or more mental health or substance use condition.

Fewer than 40% seek treatment.

Of those who do, they seek treatment from primary care.
Changing Demographic in the Population Identified with Mental Illness

- 18-29
- 30-44
- 45-64
- 65+

2000:
- 18-29: 7
- 30-44: 12
- 45-64: 11
- 65+: 10

2010:
- 18-29: 8
- 30-44: 13
- 45-64: 12
- 65+: 11

2020:
- 18-29: 9
- 30-44: 14
- 45-64: 13
- 65+: 12

2030:
- 18-29: 10
- 30-44: 15
- 45-64: 14
- 65+: 13

- 2000-2030
Common Mental Health Problems

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Substance Use
Anxiety

- scared
- chest pain
- phobia
- tension
- tense
- panic attacks
- trembling
- desperate
- angst
- jumpy
- tension
- mood
- feelings
- worry
- emotional
- disorder
- symptoms
- restlessness
- sweating
- headache
- fear
- stress
- feelings
Anxiety is common in older adults

8-20% of older adults experience an anxiety disorder

Often goes untreated in older adults

Can mimic symptoms of a heart attack
Presentation in Older Adults

- Anxiety can interfere with memory
- Differential diagnosis can be difficult
- Depression and anxiety frequently experienced together
- PTSD appears to be lower in older adults than younger adults
Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Excessive anxiety or worry

Constant

Typically diagnosed from young adulthood though the mid 50s

Most common mental illnesses of people over the age of 60

Often overlooked in older adult population

Older adults with generalized anxiety disorder tend to experience more physical symptoms, and less intense emotional disruption.

Symptoms can include fatigue, chest pains, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, trembling, twitching, irritability, sweating, nausea, lightheadedness, having to go to the bathroom frequently, feeling out of breath, and hot flashes.
Major Depression and Bi-polar disorder
Depression and Anxiety

Are among the most common mental illnesses in older adults

Can have some similar signs and symptoms

Can frequently co-occur
Presentation in the elderly

Tend to report lack of interest or pleasure in daily activities whereas younger age groups report depressed mood.

Report problems with sleep, fatigue, being slowed down, hopelessness and memory problems more frequently than younger age cohorts.

More likely to present alongside a medical condition when first presented in later life.

Not a normal part of aging.
Medical conditions can lead to depression

Biologically caused by the medical condition

Prescribed medication

Psychological response to the medical condition

Common co-morbid conditions
  ◦ Cardiovascular disease
  ◦ Stroke
  ◦ Diabetes
  ◦ Parkinson’s Disease
  ◦ Dementia
Depression can lead to medical problems

- Can increase the risk of some medical conditions
- Makes recovery more difficult
- Impairs the
  - immune system,
  - heart functioning,
  - bone density,
  - brain
- Early mortality
Suicide in Older Adults

Older adults have one of the highest rates of suicide than any other age group.

White males 85 and older are 3 times more likely to complete suicide than in the general population.

Almost every older adult who died by suicide was depressed.

Most had seen a healthcare professional within a month of their death.

Use more lethal means.

Less physical resilience to survive a suicide attempt.
Suicide Rates by Age (per 100,000)

Data Courtesy of CDC

Suicide Rates (per 100,000)

Female Male

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Age</th>
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<td>55-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
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</table>

Suicide Rates (per 100,000)
Bipolar disorder in the Elderly

- Number of seniors with bipolar disorder anticipated to increase as the aging population increases
- 10% of new cases occur after the age of 50
- May have had undiagnosed bipolar for decades
- Untreated bipolar can worsen over time
Substance Related Disorders
Under-Estimated, Under-Identified, Under-Treated

Often overlooked problem
Substance use disorders is one of the fastest growing health problems for adults 60 and over
Increase from 2.8 million in 2006 to 5.7 million in 2020 for 50 and older
Benevolent ageism
Over prescribing of opioids and benzodiazepines
Lack of age appropriate screenings
Lack of treatment programs geared for older adults
Aging bodies more vulnerable

- Slowing of metabolism
- Changes in absorption and excretion
- Changes in ratio of muscles and fatty tissue
- Reduced water in cells and tissues of the body
- Changes in vision, balance and coordination
- Presence of illness or chronic conditions
- Use of medications (prescription, over the counter, herbal remedies and supplements)
19% of older Americans are estimated to combine alcohol and medication misuse

Over 40% of older adults drink alcohol

10% of women and 33% of men drink above recommended amounts

10% - 15% of older adults in general population drink more than recommended

9.1% of 65 and older binge drink (exceeding 30 or more drinks a month 5 or more in a single day at least once in a 30-day period

2.1% 5 or more drinks on at least 5 days in the same 30-day period

10% -15% present as “At Risk” but only about .5% met the DSM IV

Anticipate rates increasing as the Baby Boomers continue to age
Normal vs Need for Professional Help

If symptoms persist
change from previous level of functioning
impacts relationships
no longer engaging in activities they enjoy
sleeping more or less than usual
weight gain or weight loss
talks about wanting to die
Accessing Services

- ACCESS SERVICES THROUGH PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR
- LIMITED NUMBER OF DISCIPLINES CAN TAKE MEDICARE
- NURSING HOMES HAVE TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WITH A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER DUE TO IMD
- LACK OF SPECIALIZATION
- WORKFORCE ISSUES
A few closing considerations

As our aging population grows, so is the number of people living with a mental health disorder.

- 89% of older adults with an SMI reside in nursing homes.
- 2 of the 3 psychiatric hospitals in Nebraska were repurposed.
- Nursing homes aren’t equipped to meet the mental health needs—while avoiding IMD status.
- Clients can’t stay in inpatient psychiatric units or LRC forever.
- People who have lived with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI) “age” faster than their like aged cohort.
- PASRR required specialized services—what is currently available.
- Our workforce is not prepared to meet the needs of older adults with an SPMI.
Resources


National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging: Addressing the Crisis in Older Adult Mental Health Report
Stephen J. Bartels, MD., MS. Mental Disorders and Aging: An Emerging Public Health Crisis in the New Millennium? Power Point


Hinrichsen, Gregory A. (2019). Assessment and Treatment of Older Adults: A Guide for Mental Health Practitioners, American Psychological Association

Mental Health Association of Maryland, Missouri Department of Mental Health and National Council for Behavioral Health. (2014). Fact Sheet: Substance Use Disorder. Mental Health First Aid USA for Older Adults and Those Dealing with Later-Life Issues, curriculum supplement. Lutherville, MD: Mental Health Association of Maryland.