

# Mental Health and Tuberculosis: Assessing and Supporting People with TB



Jen Perfetti, MA, LPC

Mental Health Consultant

Public Health Madison Dane County



# TB Survivors Messages to those Recently Diagnosed

- [Video Clip: TB Survivors' Stories](#)



What do you see in your own work about ways that TB affects Mental Health?

## Two Intersections between TB and Mental Health

- Pre-existing mental health conditions
- Developing mental health concerns as a result of the impact of TB
  - Isolation
  - Loneliness
  - Stigma
  - Shame
  - Lack of social support

# Depression

- Prevalence rate of 25-50% of TB patients
  - 3-6 times higher than healthy controls (K.A. Alene, et. al, 2018)
- Reduces likelihood of adhering to treatment
  - Less likely to:
    - Come in for care
    - Take all medications
    - Complete treatment
- Resulting in risks of becoming sicker, developing drug resistance, contributing to community spread

# Symptoms of Depression

- 5 or more of the following symptoms:
  - u Depressed mood, often accompanied by severe anxiety
  - u Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in activities
  - u Appetite disturbance
  - u Sleep disturbance
  - u Physical agitation or psychomotor slowing
  - u Fatigue, decreased energy
  - u Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
  - u Decreased concentration or inability to make decisions
  - u Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation
- Major Depressive Episode - Symptoms present most of the day, nearly every day for at least 2 weeks

# Anxiety

- Prevalence rate of 24% of TB patients (K.A. Alene, 2018)
  - Twice higher than healthy controls
- Symptoms of Anxiety
  - u Excessive worry
  - u Difficulty controlling the worry
  - u Restlessness or feeling keyed up
  - u Fatigue
  - u Difficulty concentrating or “mind going blank”
  - u Irritability
  - u Muscle tension
  - u Sleep disturbance

# Common Anxiety Disorders

- u Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- u Panic Disorder
- u Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder
- u Agoraphobia



# Features of a Panic Attack

- u A sudden period of intense fear or discomfort
- u Abrupt development of physical symptoms: heart racing, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, feeling of choking, chest pain, nausea, dizziness
- u Often accompanied by fear of dying or going crazy

# Psychosis

- u Symptoms: Agitation, racing thoughts, rapid speech, severe insomnia, hallucinations, paranoia, irrational speech or behavior, threats of suicide and infanticide
- u A medical emergency requiring immediate care

## ➤ Mental Health Reactions to TB Treatments

- Psychosis: Isoniazid, ciprofloxacin, ethambutol and rifampicin have all been documented to be associated with psychosis; the majority of the literature referring to this effect of isoniazid.
- Suicide: There have been a number of published case reports examining larger numbers of patients with suicidal behavior while receiving isoniazid treatment.
- Cycloserine has reported rates of psychiatric side-effects of 20–33%. Psychiatric side-effects reported include mania, insomnia and anxiety. Rates of psychosis secondary to cycloserine of up to 13% have been described.
- Isoniazid may interact with antidepressant medications, based on its action as a weak MAOI. Co-prescription of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or tricyclic anti-depressants with MAOIs is contraindicated, potential to induce serotonin syndrome.

Doherty, et. al. ( 2013). A review of the interplay between tuberculosis and mental health.  
General Hospital Psychiatry, 35:4, p.398-406




## Screening Tools to Consider

- u Depression: Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)
- u Anxiety: General Anxiety Disorders 7 (GAD-7)

## Supportive Communication

- u Listening is a skillful, active intervention
- u Non-judgmental emotional support
- u Understanding must precede action – listen to understand
- u Don't underestimate the healing power of supportive listening & empathy



“People will forget what you said,  
people will forget what you did, but  
people will never forget how you made  
them feel.”

~ Maya Angelou



## Why Self-Care is Essential

- u Most get into work in the human services because they feel things deeply; high empathy; other-centered
- u Work directly with people we care about and get deeply involved in their lives
- u Knowing that we are at risk for burnout means self-care is a necessity to do this work sustainably
- u Don't clear cut a forest without planting trees
- u Taking care of ourselves directly impacts our ability to give and to be of service well
- u The idea of being fully present, but then moving the emotion through and out of us. Being a conduit vs. a container.



# Questions and Discussion

