

Integrating Trauma Awareness into Your Practice

F. David Schneider, MD, MSPH

AVA Past President

Professor and Chairman

Department of Family and Community Medicine

University of Texas Southwestern



ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION & RESEARCH



Disclosures

- Unfortunately, none



Things to Consider

- Assume all patients have a history of trauma
- You are at least the 3rd person to interact with the patient



Who Needs Training

- The whole team
 - Nurses
 - Medical Assistants
 - Front Desk staff
 - Call Center staff
 - Clinicians



What Do They Need to Know?

- What is trauma?

The lasting emotional, psychological, and physical response to a deeply distressing or life-threatening event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope



What Do They Need to Know?

- What is trauma?
- Kinds of trauma
 - Interpersonal
 - Medical
 - Natural disasters
 - Loss
 - MVAs



What Do They Need to Know?

- What is trauma?
- Kinds of trauma
- Why is it important?
 - Felitti slide sets are helpful



What Do They Need to Know?

- What is trauma?
- Kinds of trauma
- Why is it important?
- What is trauma-informed care?



Trauma-Informed Care

Six Principles

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



Trauma-Informed Care

Red flags to watch for

- Difficulty with eye contact
- Anger or irritability
- Avoidance of exams or procedures
- Difficulty trusting clinicians
- Heightened startle response
- Emotional numbing or dissociation



Integrating Trauma-Informed Care

Create a Safe Environment

- Warm, predictable greetings
- Clear explanations of what will happen next
- Minimize power differentials
- Allow patients to keep clothing on when possible
- Offer choices whenever feasible



Integrating Trauma-Informed Care

Good Communication

- Non-judgmental
- Compassionate language
- Ask permission or announce when you are going to touch the patient
- Validate/acknowledge patient concerns



Integrating Trauma-Informed Care

- Avoid medical jargon
- Support patient autonomy
- Shared decision-making
- Provide patients with choices when possible
- Transparent explanations of the care



Check In on the Staff/Team

- Watch for vicarious trauma
- Frequent cause of burnout
- Peer support, debriefing opportunities
- Help deal with angry/inappropriate patients
- Encourage the team to be alert to each others' red flags

