Managing Difficult Patients – Increasing Staff & Patient Safety

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Disclaimer

- Although the information in the presentation has been tested through years of clinical practice, it is not enough to simply repeat what you see here in rote fashion. As professionals, you have the responsibility to assess the situation and the person you are dealing with to best determine how to create a peaceful resolution, or barring that, as safe an outcome as is possible.
Objectives

- A Mindset for Safety
- Eyes Wide Open – Situational Awareness
- Communication
- Understanding Aggressive Individuals
- Red Flags and Making Plans
- Conclusion
A mindset for safety

“That looks like a potentially unstable situation…”

“I’ll see if I can get some team time to brainstorm how to reduce the possibility of harm…”

“It is my job to call attention to anything I think increases risk – no matter how small…”

“How early can we spot a pattern of escalation aggression?”

Safety begins with you noticing something and telling someone about it.
A mindset for safety

Increasing Team Time

It is not enough to merely complain about a problem; there must be action!
A mindset for safety

Making plans

- Identify the problem
- Formulate your response
- Have a back up for when that plan fails. Always ask, “And what if…”
- Share the plan
Objectives

A Mindset for Safety

Eyes Wide Open – Situational Awareness

Communication

Understanding Aggressive Individuals

Red Flags and Making Plans

Conclusion
Eyes Wide Open – A Look at Situational Awareness

If you notice something, tell others!
Eyes Wide Open –
A Look at Situational Awareness

The vast majority of incidents are **Preventable**

It’s about recognizing something that could become a safety risk, and **letting others know**.

*IF YOU NOTICE SOMETHING, TELL OTHERS!*
Eyes Wide Open –
A Look at Situational Awareness

It’s about being pro-active in identifying an unstable situation and taking steps to eliminate the risks.

People don’t just “snap”

There is a process as observable, and often as predictable, as water coming to a boil.

IF YOU NOTICE SOMETHING, TELL OTHERS!
# Eyes Wide Open – A Look at Situational Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PAST</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRESENT</strong></th>
<th><strong>FUTURE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happened last time?</td>
<td><strong>What can I do now?</strong></td>
<td>Where am I going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What just occurred?</td>
<td><strong>What else is happening?</strong></td>
<td>What could happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where was I?</td>
<td><strong>Where is my team?</strong></td>
<td>If this happens again...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there history of this?</td>
<td><strong>Do they know where I am?</strong></td>
<td>How can we be better next time?</td>
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Who, What, When, Where, How & Why
Eyes Wide Open – A Look at Situational Awareness

- Red-faced or white-faced
- Sweating
- Pacing, restless, or repetitive movements
- Trembling or shaking
- Clenched jaws or fists
- Exaggerated or violent gestures
- Change in voice
- Loud talking or chanting
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Scowling, sneering or use of abusive language
- Glaring or avoiding eye contact
- Violating your personal space (they get too close)

If you notice something, tell others!
Eyes Wide Open – A Look at Situational Awareness

Domino theory

98% of the accidents can be prevented
2% of the accidents are ‘acts of god’

W. H. Heinrich

If you notice something, tell others!
Objectives

A Mindset for Safety

Eyes Wide Open – Situational Awareness

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Conclusion
Communication skills

Dealing with Delusions & Psychosis

The delusional world is like a jungle.

However, there are usually also clearings - areas in these individual’s lives where they are not delusional.

If a person gets stuck within a delusions, it is sometimes very hard to change the subject, it requires grace and finesse.
Communication skills

Dealing with Delusions & Psychosis

Actions:

• Do not challenge the delusion
• Speak calmly and clearly
• You may need to repeat yourself
• Focus on the behavior
Communication skills

Dealing with Paranoia

Persons with paranoia can live their lives like detectives. Always searching for clues and evidence to prove what they know to be true.

Actions:

• Try to let the person know what is going on.
• Be mindful of personal space; too close can be dangerous, too far away can be cold or confusing.
• Reduce over-stimulating activities.
• Speak calmly and clearly.
Communication skills

Speaking to the person within the illness is an art.

People can have the same symptoms, the causes can be very different.

People are very complex; a person might be paranoid but also under the influence, delusional and psychotic.

Let others know – your team can be the strongest skill you have, not only in the moment, but also to brainstorm new skills you can add to your map.
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Understanding Aggressive Individuals

“De-escalating” techniques rapidly decrease the likelihood that anger will escalate to the point of becoming unmanageable or even dangerous. To de-escalate, one must understand what is happening

1. **Mood changes:** Avoid eye contact, nervous, frightened, hypersensitive, frustrated, etc.

2. **Cognitive changes:** Less and less open to negotiations, using negative self-talk, reduced concentration, less able to hear your perspective, less good judgment, etc.
3. **Actions:** Trespassing on your personal space, deliberately provocative, loud, using obscene language, making repeated demands, pressured speech, twisting what you say, making threats, bully, etc.

4. **Physical:** Body is tense, perspiring, clenched teeth, staring eyes, headaches, pain in chest, heavy or deep breathing, inflating their body, puffing their chest, etc.

**Most notably:** IS IT A CHANGE?
Understanding Aggressive Individuals

Take a moment and list out as many **examples** of Aggression, you would notice in a person.

- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________
- ________________________________

**Most notably: IS IT A CHANGE?**
Understanding Aggressive Individuals

- Aggression
  - Inappropriate Behavior
  - Anger
  - Extreme Anger
  - Violence
Understanding Aggressive Individuals

Calming Strategies

Stay away from power struggles.

Take time to have a short conversation.

Leave people alone if that’s what they want.

Calm, direct, and open contact is best.
Understanding Aggressive Individuals

Getting Help & Calling 911

COMMUNICATION

HOW DO YOU ACCESS HELP AT YOUR LOCATION?
Understanding Aggressive Individuals

CALLING 911

Be able to state:

- Your name:
- Address of agency:
- What is happening: “Person is out of control, there is property damage, person is threatening staff, we are afraid for our safety”
- What you need: “We need assistance in controlling person, medical emergency, person escorted off campus, police for threatening individual, ambulance to transport suicidal person…”
- Description of person (name, age, gender):
- History (mental illness, CD issues, history of violence):
- Point of contact (Name/description of staff person who will meet officers when they arrive):
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Red Flags and Making Plans

Be on alert for...

- Odd behavior/ statements
- An increase in physical or emotional agitation
- Indicators of psychiatric instability
- Other changes: laughter, crying, etc.
Red Flags and Making Plans

Making Plans

1. Identify the problem
   - What is it?
   - What caused it?
   - Have we seen this before?

2. Formulate your response
   2. What has worked in the past?
   3. What does not work?
   4. Brainstorming _What should we try?

3. Have a back up for when that plan fails. Always ask, “And what if…”
   - Cross check with collaterals (supervisor and team members)
   - Present your rationale
   - Require follow up, especially if plan is used
   - Update documentation

4. Share the plan
   - Location of communications
   - Updating paperwork
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Conclusion

- Communication is key

- All staff members should pay attention to changes in behavior(s) or dangerous statements by a person.

- Knowing your agency’s communication process is key to addressing safety concerns.

- Remember: addressing a safety concern is in the best interest of all.
The End

THANKS FOR WATCHING!