

A Proactive Approach for Coping with Cancer

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Objectives

Understand	Understand the impact of stress & trauma on cancer and cancer treatment outcomes
Learn about	Learn about the interplay of trauma and cancer
Discuss	Discuss strategies which comprise a trauma-informed approach to cancer care
Highlight	Highlight interventions for coping with cancer/trauma & the role of mental health professionals in partnering with medical specialties

Disclosures

MY SHARED VIEWS
ARE MY OWN AND
DO NOT REFLECT THE
VIEWS OF MY
EMPLOYER

PTSD & Cancer

Cancer as a **traumatic stressor**

PTSD DSM-V Criterion A

- Exposure to **actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence** in one or more of the following ways:
 - Directly experiencing the event
 - Witnessing the event as it occurred to others
 - Learning the event occurred to a close family member or friend
 - Repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the event (i.e., first responders)

Emotional responses:

- Acute fear, sadness, anger, enduring adjustment difficulties, anxiety, depression

Variability in psychological distress

Statistics: National Center for PTSD

About half of all US adults will experience at least 1 traumatic event in their lifetime, but most do not develop PTSD

About 6% of the population will have PTSD at some point in their lives

About 5% of the population has PTSD in any given year

Lifetime prevalence is higher in women (8%) than men (4%); this is in part due to the types of traumatic events women are more likely to experience (such as sexual assault)

Veterans are more likely to have PTSD than civilians (lifetime prevalence 7%)

The Intersection of Trauma & Cancer

Cancer-risk
behaviors

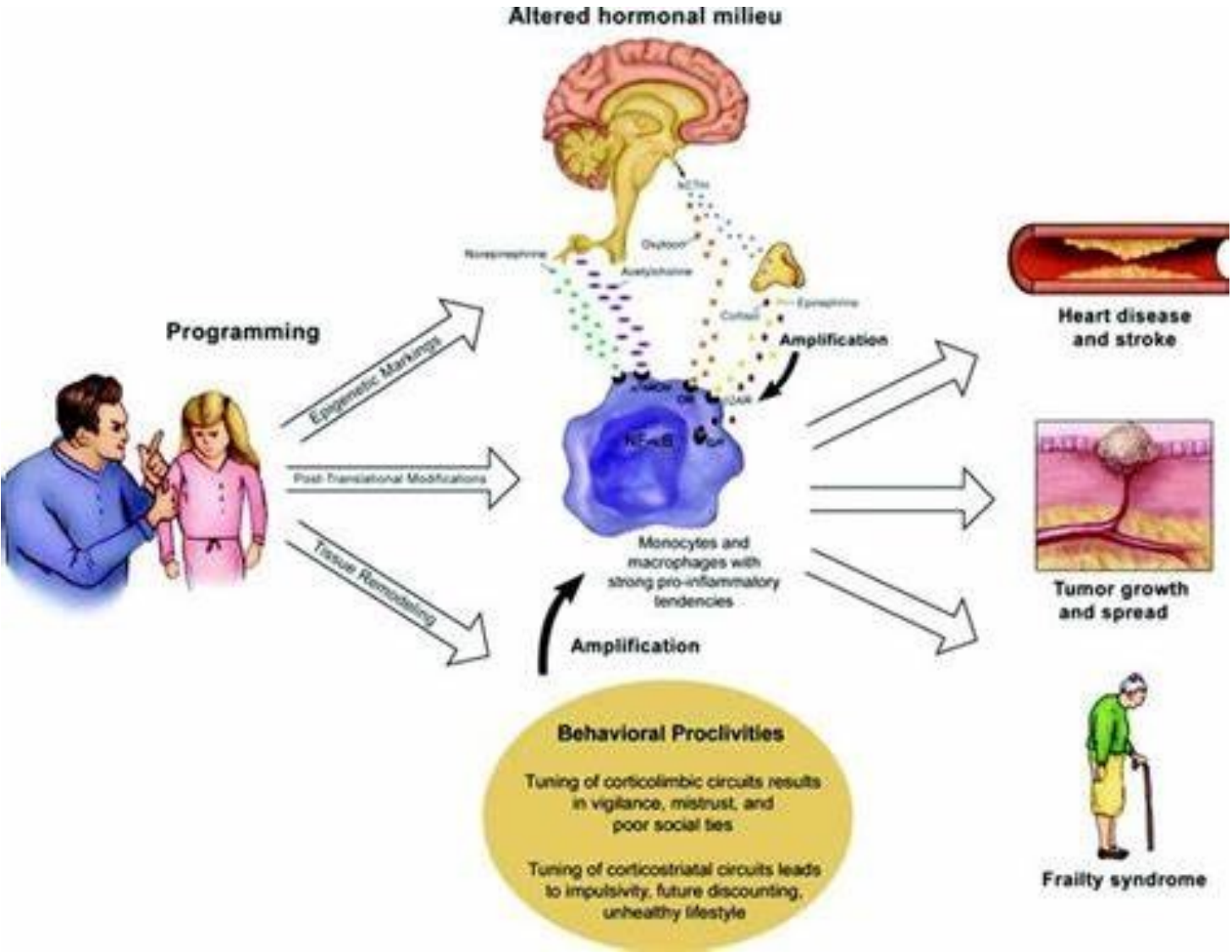
Cancer
screening
activities

Receiving
diagnosis

Treatment

Remission &
survivorship
care

Early Trauma History & Its Effects on Cancer/Cancer Risk



Association of childhood trauma with increased rate of fatigue, depression, stress, and inflammation in breast cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy (Han et al., 2016)

Early adverse psychosocial experiences negatively impact adult health and disease risk (Shonkoff et al., 2009; Danese et al., 2011)

Risk Factors for Cancer-related PTSD

(Cordova et al., 2017)

Pre-cancer diagnosis or lifetime trauma history

Pre-cancer diagnosis or lifetime history of PTSD or other psychiatric conditions

Low socioeconomic status

Young age

Limited social support or presence of negative social support

Advanced disease

Invasive treatment

Dissociative symptoms regarding cancer experience (e.g. unable to recall cancer diagnosis discussion with doctor)

Persistent intrusive re-experiencing of cancer-related experiences (e.g., repeated mental replaying of diagnosis)

SAMHSA- Six Key Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach



Trauma-Informed Approaches to Care (TIC)

Practical Application: The Four Cs

Calm	Contain	Care	Cope
<p>Pay attention to how you are feeling when you are caring for the patient. Breathe deeply and calm yourself to model and promote calmness for the patient, yourself, and your co-workers</p>	<p>Limit trauma history detail to maintain emotional and physical safety. Provide education, resources, and referrals to trauma-specific care without requiring disclosure of trauma</p>	<p>Practice self-care and self-compassion while caring for others</p>	<p>Emphasize coping skills, positive relationships, and interventions that build resilience</p>

Calm

What are current practices implemented to maintain a safe environment (in the waiting room, during exams)?

How do you typically respond when you encounter an anxious, angry, or tearful patient?

Does your team have any practices to promote stress management or enhance the wellbeing of staff (i.e., daily mindfulness practice at huddle/lunchtime)?

Contain

Current screening practices

When you suspect a patient experienced trauma, how do you handle?

How do you currently respond to sensitive disclosures from patients?

Does your clinic/hospital have access to resources (pamphlets/brochures) readily available to disseminate?

Care

How do you currently address harmful coping behaviors with patients (i.e., substance abuse, self-harm, overeating)?

What are ways to enhance communication with your patients to promote de-stigmatization and embody compassion?

“Thank you for sharing this with me. I am sorry that happened. We are here to help. Can you tell me how you feel this experience is still affecting you?”

Cope

“What are some things that have helped you in the past when you’ve felt this way?”

“What are you doing or thinking when you have brief moments of feeling happy or calm?”

“What thoughts or actions or people give you hope?”

“What do you think will help you heal?”

Applying TIC in Medicine

Screening & delivery of care practices

- Screening for trauma (universal vs. targeted) and response to disclosure of trauma
- Intervention for at-risk populations (community; Currie et al., 2019)



Trauma-Informed Care

- ❖ Importance of an interdisciplinary team for delivery of care
- ❖ Screening for emotional distress
 - ❖ A tiered approach to inquiry
 - ❖ “Have you had any life experiences that you feel have impacted your health and well-being?”
 - ❖ “Can you share how these experiences have affected you?”



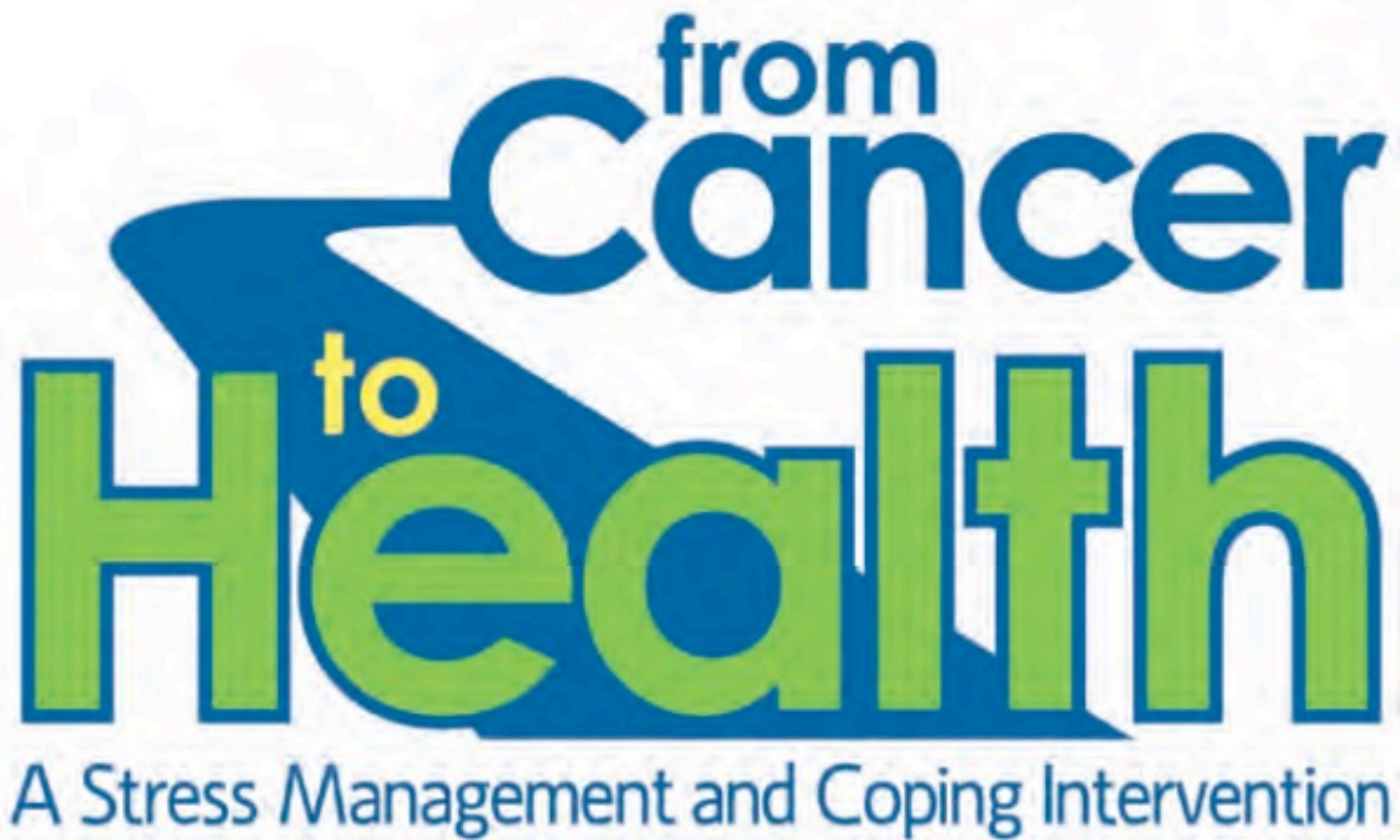
Treatment of Trauma & PTSD

Evidence based psychotherapy

Medication

Combination

Alternative therapies and trauma-informed interventions



A
Biobehavioral
Approach to
Coping with
Cancer

Future Research Implications

Assessing the experiences of trauma survivors (vs. non-trauma survivors) in the health care system

Examine if patient-centered techniques encourage more participation in preventive care and if this translates to better health outcomes/cost savings for patients with trauma histories

Examine what types of medical interactions help trauma survivors successfully change health behavior/are trained trauma providers more likely to engage traumatized patients in preventive care?

Do trauma survivors place a high level of subjective value on specialty referrals and do they follow up?

Summary

Trauma exposure is highly prevalent and has widespread physical and emotional health consequences across the lifespan

Health care providers benefit from understanding the multilevel impact of trauma and how it influences patients' engagement with health care

Provision of trauma-informed care involves recognition of the signs and symptoms of traumatization; integrates knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization to foster secure patient-provider relationships that enhance outcomes



Questions?



Thank You!

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