Safely Caring For Patients With Behavioral Emergencies
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Defining Behavioral Emergencies
• Behavior
  – Is a person’s observable conduct and activity
• Behavioral Emergency
  – Is a situation in which a patient’s behavior becomes so unusual, bizarre, threatening, or dangerous that it alarms the patient or family

Indications of Behavioral Condition
• Interfere with core life functions
• Pose a threat to the life or well-being of self or others
• Significantly deviate from society’s expectations or norms

Pathophysiology of Psychiatric Disorders
• 20% of population has SOME type of mental health problem
• Incapacitates more people than all other health problems combined
• Most cared for in outpatient setting

General Causes
• Biological or Organic
  – Result from disease processes, structural changes, infection
• Psychosocial
  – Related to personality style, unresolved conflict, or crisis management
• Sociocultural
  – Actions and interactions with society and to life factors

Specific Disorders
• Want to read all about them?
  “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”
• Cognitive Disorders
  – Dementia
• Anxiety
  – Phobias
  – Post traumatic stress
• Mood Disorders
  – Depression

Want to learn more about depression? visit www.depressed.com
Assessment and Care

- Assessment and care is similar to care for medical patient
- Focus on patient rapport
- Patient presentation
- Taken vitals

Patient Response

- Actions of anger
- Pacing
- Nervous
- Body language worsens
- No eye contact
- Apparent anger
- Voice gets loud
- Full thoughts
- Decreasing eye contact
- Cooperative

Patient Care

- Scene size-up
  - Safety!
- Initial Assessment
  - Control the scene
- Focused History
  - Interviewing with poor people skills will not help
- SAMPLE History
  - Pay attention to medical history and medications

What Can We Do When Things Get Violent?

- Restraint of patients controversial
- Use law enforcement
- Use PPE
- Simple-Complex
- Follow Local Protocols

Know Your Local Protocols

- Individual rights
- Involuntary restraint
- Right to refuse treatment

How to Treat

- Be supportive and calm
- Treat any existing medical problem
- Do not allow patient to be alone
- Respond in simple manor
- Transport
Scenario
You and your partner are dispatched for an attempted suicide

• You arrive to a young woman screaming for you to help her friend who is threatening to kill herself.

Prior to Entering

• What additional information do you need?
• Should you enter this residence prior to obtaining law enforcement assistance?
  – Why?
  – Why not?
• The friend tells you that the patient does not have any kind of weapon.
• Your partner radios for law enforcement

Scene Assessment

• You find a girl in her early teens sitting on the couch sobbing
• She is conscious, alert, and oriented
• Both parents are out of town
• She is staying alone until tomorrow afternoon

Assessment

You calmly explain to the patient that you need to ask some questions to get her the help she needs.
• What type of questions do you want to ask?
  – She states that although she has not done anything to injure herself today, she wants to kill herself and will attempt to do so if she gets a chance.

Vitals

• Breathing 20 breaths/min
• Skin is pink, warm, and dry
• Pulse 88 beats/min
• No obvious bleeding
• BP 120/82 mm Hg

Is this patient critical or not?

Focused Assessment

• SAMPLE History
  – She has no known allergies and takes birth control pills daily but no other medication. She attempted suicide last year by taking an entire bottle of her mom’s diazepam (Valium).

Does this patient need to go to the hospital?
Wrench in the Mix

- Law enforcement arrives. Your patient becomes hysterical. She runs into the bathroom, slamming the door.
- She refuses to open the door. Afraid of what she may do to herself, the police officer breaks the door down and restrains her.
- Should you and your partner participate in patient restraint?

Transport Decision

- Police ask patient to be transported by ambulance
- What are your priorities during transport?

Review

- 20% of population has SOME type of mental health problem
- Indications of Behavioral Condition
  - Interfere with core life functions
  - Significantly deviate from society’s expectations or norms

- SCENE SAFETY
  - Calls take toll on EMS workers

1. Which of the following statements is FALSE?
   A. You are able to predict whether a person will become violent.
   B. Scene safety is always primary concern
   C. Behavior problems may be the result of drug or alcohol abuse.
   D. Most people with a mental illness are dangerous.

2. When restraining a patient on a stretcher, it is necessary to constantly reassess the patient’s:
   A. Level of consciousness
   B. ABC’s
   C. Emotional status
   D. Pain status

3. A disturbed patient should always be transported with restraints.
   A. True   B. False

4. All patients with mental health disorders should be considered dangerous and violent.
   A. True   B. False

5. A restrained patient should be placed face down on stretcher for EMS safety.
   A. True   B. False
Questions?

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