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Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide: Risk Factors, Screening, Intervention, and Collaborative Action

Mark Jones Ph.D

Objectives

- Discuss TBI as a risk factor for suicide ideation, attempts, and deaths
- Articulate the overlap between risk factors for sustaining a TBI and dying by suicide
- Strategies for identifying and addressing co-occurring TBI and mental health conditions
- Identify the needs and opportunities for cross-sector collaboration



Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Promoting a public health approach to suicide prevention



The nation's only federally supported resource center devoted to advancing the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*.

TBI Defined



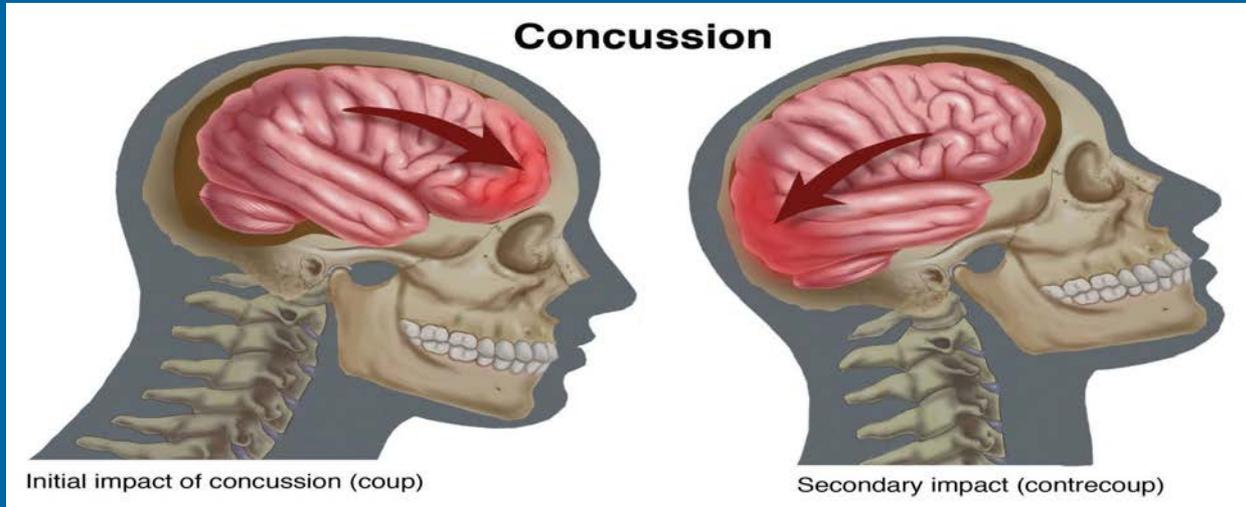
Psychological Trauma: a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. An experience that produces psychological injury or pain.

Physical Trauma: Also known as "injury", is a physiological wound caused by an external source. It can also be described as "a physical wound or injury, such as a fracture or blow".



TBI Defined

A blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain



Symptoms of TBI

Motor and Sensory

- Dizziness and lightheadedness
- Fatigue or lethargy
- Headaches and other pain
- Sleep disturbances

Cognitive

- Poor planning, follow through, problem solving, and judgment
- Impaired attention and concentration
- Language and communication impairments
- Worsened memory

Emotional

- Aggression and irritability
- Anxiety
- Apathy or lack of spontaneity
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Impulsive, disruptive, or socially inappropriate behavior
- Lack of self-awareness
- Personality changes



Concussion

Mild

Moderate

Severe

Prevalence of TBI

- 2.5 million TBI-related ED visits, hospitalizations, and deaths in 2010
 - Rate of 17.38 Per 100,000 TBI Deaths from 2004-2010
- Self-inflicted: leading cause of Fatal TBI in the 15- 64 age group (2006-2010)
 - Rate of 5.02 100,000 TBI Suicide Deaths from 2004-2010
- Falls, Motor-vehicle Crashes, Struck By/Against, and Assaults: Leading cause of non-fatal TBI

TBI as Risk Factor For Suicide

“Traumatic brain injury is associated with substantially elevated risks of premature mortality, particularly for suicide, injuries, and assaults, even after adjustment for sociodemographic and familial factors.”

Fazel 2014

“The risk for committing suicide is two to four times greater for individuals with TBI than for the general population. Even mild brain injury increases risk.”

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment 2010

TBI and Suicide: Co-Occurring Risk Factors and Symptoms

- Substance Abuse
 - Can lead to TBI
 - Often co-occurs with suicidality
 - Can be a symptom of sustaining a TBI

“When a psychiatric disorder or SUD co-occurs with TBI, the risk for attempted or completed suicide is further increased.”

Center for Substance Abuse
Treatment 2010

TBI and Suicide: Co-Occurring Risk Factors and Symptoms

- Criminal Justice Involvement
 - High prevalence of TBI in both Juvenile and adult settings
 - Increased risk for suicide in both settings



TBI and Suicide: Co-Occurring Risk Factors and Symptoms

- Living in a Rural Area
 - Increased severity of TBI & longer recovery time
 - Increased risk of dying by suicide



TBI and Suicide: Co-Occurring Risk Factors and Symptoms

- Sports?
 - Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)
 - Transition after a high-profile career (job-loss)
 - Life Style

“At present. . . there is insufficient scientific evidence to conclude that there is a strong causal relationship between the presence of these proteinopathies and suicide in former athletes.”

Iverson, 2013

TBI and Suicide: Co-Occurring Risk Factors and Symptoms

- Experiences with Violence
 - Domestic violence
 - Child maltreatment
 - Veterans



A Comprehensive Approach



10 Actions Steps for Dealing with the Aftermath of a Suicide

IMMEDIATE: Acute Phase

1. **Coordinate:** Contain the crisis
2. **Notify:** Protect and respect the privacy rights of the deceased employee and their loved ones during death notification
3. **Communicate:** Reduce the potential for contagion
4. **Support:** Offer practical assistance to family

SHORT-TERM: Recovery Phase

5. **Link:** Identify and link impacted employees and additional support resources and refer those most affected to professional mental health services
6. **Comfort:** Support, comfort, and promote healthy grieving of the employees who have been impacted by the loss
7. **Restore:** Restore equilibrium and optimal functioning in the workplace
8. **Lead:** Build and sustain trust and confidence in organizational leadership

LONGER-TERM: Reconstructing Phase

9. **Honor:** Prepare for anniversary reactions and other milestone dates
10. **Sustain:** Transition postvention to suicide prevention