COMPLEX TRAUMA IN ADULTS

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TSS

- Single episode adult trauma → PTSD
- Complex trauma including asylum seekers and refugees
- Developmental trauma
- Groups and organizations
- Teaching and training
Clinical Case

Complex trauma
Spectrum of trauma

- Transitory trauma reactions
- PTSD
- Complex trauma
- Developmental trauma
PTSD

- Actual or threatened death or serious injury, or threat to self or others
- Intense fear, helplessness or horror (DSM)
- 50% exposed at least one in lifetime
- 8% survivors will develop PTSD
- Symptoms around 3 months, occasionally years later
- Present at least one month (DSM)
PTSD

- Re-experiencing phenomena
  - Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections
  - Recurrent distressing dreams
  - Acting or feeling as if events are recurring
  - Intense physiological distress to cues
  - Physiological reactivity to cues
PTSD

- Avoidance and numbing
  - Avoidance of thoughts, feelings and conversations
  - Avoidance of reminders
  - Psychological amnesia
  - Reduced interest in related activities
  - Detachment or estrangement feelings
  - Restricted range of affect
  - Sense of a foreshortened future
PTSD

- Increased arousal
- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
PTSD Epidemiology

- Lifetime prevalence PTSD 6.8%
- Women 10.4% (2 x men)
- Men 60% lifetime exposure, women 51%
- 12 month prevalence 3.5%
Co-morbidity

- Co-morbidity rates often over 80%
- 44% with PTSD meet criteria for 3 or more other diagnoses in lifetime
- Most commonly depression, anxiety and substance misuse / dependence
- Suicide risk 6 times general pop’n
Complex trauma

Judith Herman 1992 Trauma and Recovery

Chronic repetitive trauma → PTSD symptoms and:

- Dissociation
- Somatisation
- Re-victimization
- Affect dysregulation
- Disruptions in identity
DSM IV R Constellation

- Impaired affect modulation
- Self destructive and impulsive behaviour
- Dissociative symptoms
- Somatic complaints
- Feelings of ineffectiveness
- Shame, despair, hopelessness
- Feeling permanently damaged
- Loss of previously sustained beliefs
- Social withdrawal
- Feeling constantly threatened
- Impaired relationships with others
- A change from previous personality characteristics
DSM V Working party on adult trauma

- PTSD criteria
- Acute Stress disorder criteria
- Dissociative Disorder criteria
- Adjustment Disorder criteria
- Proposing new categories of Disorders of External Stress NOS and Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD)
- Re-grouping of trauma with Dissociative disorder
- Highlighting need to consider cross-cultural issues
Current evidence base

1. PTSD NICE guidelines
   - Tf-CBT and EMDR
   - Limited trials psychodynamic

2. Complex trauma

   No current NICE guidelines

   Australian Review – Nickerson, Bryant et al 2010
   4-86% PTSD Dx
Trauma themes

1. the centrality of meaning
2. the importance of words
3. the repetition compulsion
4. loss and mourning
Trauma

- Freud – piercing of the protective shield
- Flooding of the mind
- Excesses of excitation
- Discriminatory processes lost
Stages of trauma

First Stage
- Chaos, helplessness, horror
- Primitive anxiety
- Loss of symbolic functioning

Second stage
- Organization and meaning through binding
- Past and present linked

Royal College of Psychiatrists Medical Psychotherapy Faculty
Annual Residential Meeting 19 - 20 April 2012
Melanie Klein

- The internal world
- Paranoid schizoid position
- Persecution, disintegration, annihilation anxieties
- Defences of splitting, projection and projective identification
Trauma stage two

- Binding of the traumatic event with the relationship linked to the re-awakened primitive anxieties
- The meaning of the event becomes inextricably linked with the past
Words

- Loss of symbolic functioning
- Words as symbolic equations i.e. things in themselves
- No “as if” or thinking about
Repetition compulsion

THE EVENT

EARLY RELATIONSHIPS

TRANSFERENCE
Mourning in Trauma

- Real losses
- Survivor guilt
- Psychic changes
- Facing the extent of human destructiveness
- Facing the psychic reality of mortality
Identification

- Identification with the aggressor
- Identification with dead / damaged object
- Persistent victim state
Refugee phases of experience

1. Anticipation
2. Devastating events
3. Survival
4. Adjustment
Refugees

- Papadopolous – nostalgic yearning
- Levy – Containment and Validation
- Fox – loss of home = loss of good object = loss of containment
Treatment

- Adaptation of psychoanalytic principles — an applied method
- Transference / counter-transference
- Flexibility in approach, setting, modality
- External and internal realities
- Containment of the therapist