

Hepatitis C & Mental Health (Treatment & Co Infection)

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Topics

- What is this about?
 - How to manage a diagnosis of Hep C or HCV/HIV Co Infection - (what education is needed about HCV, at the outset)
 - Combating depression, while living with one or more infectious disease
 - The need to assist clients in dealing with lifestyle changes that will help clients manage their HCV
- Why is it important?
 - When the liver isn't working properly the whole body is affected
 - Earlier intervention leads to better outcomes
 - Clients who engage in treatment will experience a period of unprecedented clean time, clarity, focus, and a sense of achievement, as a result of treatment—*we need to help them capitalize on this*

Topics cont'd.

- How do you do it?
 - Learn to think of Hepatitis C Treatment as a continuum, from pre-treatment preparations to post treatment adjustments
 - Address all the stages along the continuum
 - Don't put up barriers to treatment - invite all clients to be engaged and tackle the roadblocks one by one as they present themselves
 - Find a way to create a support team using your clinic and community resources

Step 1: The Hep C / co infection Diagnosis

- **Learn to foster a hopeful message**

- ⑩ help clients to feel hopeful about their future and treatment options for both Hep C and HIV (success rates, new drugs, slowing the progression of liver damage)
- ⑩ Don't downplay HCV in favour of focusing on HIV (clients may be trained to think their HIV takes precedence)
- ⑩ Encourage them to deal with their HCV proactively (especially in coinfecting individuals whose liver damage will progress more quickly)
- ⑩ where possible connect clients with counselling (addiction?) to help them deal with underlying issues (PTSD, self esteem & body image, abuse, etc.)
- ⑩ create a treatment support group where they can learn how to manage their HCV both before and during and after treatment

Step 1 cont'd: The HCV diagnosis and depression

- Depression can affect clients both before, during and after treatment.
- BDI screening and SSRI mgmt.

Step 2: Demographics – Know your clients

- Who are *your* Hepatitis C clients?
- What is their level of stability and support?
- What is their level of education and skill set?
- Are there native or other cultural/ethnic group aspects that you need to consider?

Step 3: Understand the HCV Tx Continuum (pre -> post)

- There are many areas of wellness that need to be addressed before treatment can begin (housing, nutrition, safety, physical and emotional health)
- Don't overwhelm the clients with what they need to do to prepare - invite them into the process and let them engage, the barriers can be met one by one
- Seeing other group members move towards and start treatment is a powerful motivational tool
- Reassure clients that they will bounce back post-Tx but this may take weeks or even months depending on the individual. More liver damage at the start usually means a more challenging treatment and a longer recovery time

HCV and Mental Health Issues

- encourage SSRI's to manage depression prophylactically especially in those with a history of depression and anger issues, where possible combine with counselling (be prepared at the outset)
- connect clients with addiction services but don't require abstinence - stable users can be treated successfully and may get cleaner during the process
- *cannabis* may be your friend
- what about alcohol?
- treating clients with a psychiatric diagnosis - is it possible?
- psychiatric reactions to treatment - what are they and what should I do?
- help clients access resources that will enhance their life and wellness and aid in treatment success - nutritional \$ supplements - govt. applications for disability etc. - housing letters - advocacy

Step 4: Create an Integrated Support Team & Support Group

- Doctors - nurses – counsellors
- Find a counsellor or social worker who enjoys group work
 - Try contacting local community centres, addiction counselling, or family preservation services in your area. Consider working with clergy or other spiritual or community leaders who might see the value in your program
- Create a weekly support group where clients can receive both medical and emotional support (time and cost effective)
- Hold bi-weekly team meetings to discuss client readiness, progress, and future plans
 - Clients will reveal different pieces of information to each team member, share what you know

Step 5: Create a Space for Post-Treatment Dialogue

- Keep the door open and always allow program graduates to come back and share their experiences: *their message of change is a powerful motivator to others*
- Open up topics in group like “Do you think you will want to go back to work or school after your treatment is over?”
 - This allows clients to vent their fears (“Will I achieve an SVR?”, stigmas, energy level) in a safe supportive environment
- Help clients to gain access to appropriate emotional and vocational counselling
 - Min. of Employment Programs, retraining, education, legal advice, debt counselling, Open Door Group BC, health and wellness, etc.)

Step 6: Encourage Post Tx Follow-up

- Make follow up a part of treatment
- Help clients set appointments for counselling, etc., as a part of the program
- Some clients may decide to attend a drug treatment program during or after their HCV Tx; encourage dialogue around options
- Tell them you are proud of their achievements and their courage
- Ask them what they plan to do with their new skills (sobriety, energy, ability to follow through)

To Recap ...

- Step 1: The Diagnosis - Be Hopeful - address depression ASAP
- Step 2: Demographics – Know your clients
- Step 3: Understand the Continuum of HCV Tx
- Step 4: Create an Integrated Support Team and Support Group
- Step 5: Create a Space for Post-Treatment Dialogue
- Step 6: Encourage Post Tx Follow-up and Engagement

For more information come and visit us:

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- **Visit our group**
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