Crisis in Colorado

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Introduction

In July of 2012, a movie theater in Aurora Colorado experienced a horrific shooting. During the opening weekend of the movie *The Dark Knight Rises*, a man by the name of James Holmes walked into the theatre and began shooting at innocent viewers. A total of twelve people were killed while over seventy people were injured from the gunfire or other physical injuries. Police eventually apprehended the shooter, and he was arrested. Despite pleading not guilty for reason of insanity, Holmes was tried and convicted on twenty-four counts of first-degree murder and over a hundred counts of attempted first degree murder. In the wake of this tragic event, many survivors and the families of survivors were left traumatized and in need of help. Many mental health resources are available to help in cases like this and in fact Colorado even implemented some. This paper will review some potential resources and aids that can be made available to survivors of such a traumatic experience.

Mental Health Resources

After looking at what happened in Aurora, the need for any kind of mental health services became obvious, not only for the families of the deceased and the survivors but also to prevent incidents like this from happening again. Soon after the shooting occurred, lawmakers in Colorado passed a bill to fund a response system for mental health crises (Mental Health Colorado, 2017). Colorado Crisis Services was created for this purpose, they offer a crisis hotline where anyone can call anytime and be connected to a mental health professional and get support in their crisis. They also offer walk in crisis support at multiple locations around Colorado where people can go and get in person assistance and support. These resources are useful for any person going through a mental health crisis but especially to those who were victims in some way of the

Aurora shooting. Often after such a traumatic experience, people will develop anxiety, PTSD, depression or even grief. These resources provide an easy to access way for these individuals to get help anonymously and relate to other potential resources.

Colorado's response to this tragedy in creating a crisis response system helped a lot of people, Mental Health Colorado (2017) claims that since the creation of the crisis response system, over half a million people have been helped. Although this system seems to have been successful, other resources are available for those suffering from mental health issues such as cognitive behavioral therapy. This type of therapy can be useful for patients with many conditions such as PTSD, Depression, or anxiety. All of which are possibilities for the members of the community of Aurora following the shooting. The idea of Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on a few core principles, the first being that many mental problems arise from faulty thinking or learned behavior, and that that behavior can be unlearned, and better coping mechanisms can take its place (American Psychological Association, 2017). With this principle in mind, this treatment typically involves strategies to change behavior such as learning to face fears or relax the body in cases of anxiety. In short, this treatment could help people following a shooting to overcome their anxiety or PTSD.

Another mental health service that could be made available to people after such a tragic event is pharmacological therapy. Many medications are available and proven to be effective in the treatment of mental illnesses such as depression, PTSD, or anxiety. These medications may be used long term or only for a short time. Some medications for anxiety such as benzodiazepines are strongly recommended to only be used for a short time due to the risk of dependence. With depression in particular, antidepressant therapy may take up to nine months to be effective with maintenance treatment for a few months following (Ballenger, 2000).

Depending on the mental illness that the survivors or families of the survivors may be suffering from, medication could make a big difference in the recovery of these patients.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in wake of horrific events such as the mass shooting that happened in Aurora, Colorado, many mental health resources are available and were made available to members of the community. Following an event like this, many mental illnesses may arise in the survivors or anyone involved such as PTSD, depression, anxiety or others. Treatments such as pharmacological interventions or cognitive behavioral therapy are available to help those suffering. Finally, crisis prevention hotlines are an easy to access way for anyone to get help no matter what kind of crisis they are going through, and they were shown to be effective following the Aurora shooting.

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