Crisis Interventions

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Background

A week before Christmas day in the year 2020 I was riding home from college with my friend and her parents. We were reflecting on the semester and expressing our excitement and concern towards the upcoming school year. When we were two hours away from my friend's house, the phone rang. "Mom? I can't breathe. I don't know what to do". I heard my friend's brother on the other end of the phone having a panic attack. He had just gotten back from work and was home with his older brother. He had never had a panic attack before, and his parents weren't there to comfort him. Being so far away from where her brother was made us all feel helpless. "Sweetheart, call your brother and tell him to make sure the gun safe is locked and to hide all of the prescription drugs." This family was in a crisis. A fight to save the life of their loved one, and they were running out of time.

In the healthcare industry, mental health crisis services are a relatively new service. As acute anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal ideations rise, so must the availability of medical interventions to aid individuals experiencing an acute mental health crisis. There are several outlets available to the community to help with mental health crises including crisis hotlines, crisis centers, emergency care, and intensive crisis rehabilitation centers.

Crisis hotlines are phone services dedicated to the support and de-escalation of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. These hotlines emphasize preventing individuals who have a high suicide risk from harming themselves or others. In a study performed by Vattø and associates (Vattø et al., 2020), the focus of crisis hotlines were to provide immediate

emotional support, a safe space, and an existential processing framework. Individuals who called into these particular hotlines reported feeling validated, supported, and listened to. Through the use of crisis hotlines, individuals experiencing an acute mental health crisis have access to a support system. At the conclusion of these phone calls, individuals are often referred to proper healthcare facilities to help promote healing and long-term care of that individual.

The second option for those experiencing an acute mental health crisis are crisis centers. A study performed by Arzamarski and associates (Arzamarski et al., 2019) detailed the treatment of individuals in the Bradley Hospital Crisis Clinic. Crisis clinics such as Bradley Hospital's use a family-based integrated care (FBIC) approach. This type of therapy involves the patient and their family for a more involved, meaningful, and stable healing process. Because this type of crisis intervention involves the entire family, the patient is more likely to receive the support they need on a long-term basis. Crisis centers will refer their patients to family practice healthcare providers for care after the crisis has been resolved and the patient is no longer in immediate danger.

Individuals experiencing an acute crisis also have the option of seeking care in an emergency department. Hospital staff are trained to meet the safety needs of a patient during an acute crisis, and the emergency department is available at any time of day when an individual's usual support systems may not be. When in the emergency department, the immediate needs of the patient can be met and then referrals are made to outside resources depending on the severity of the crisis. Family practice providers, psychiatrists, and long-term mental health facilities are all long-term treatment for those struggling with mental health issues that are not currently

experiencing a crisis. Long-term care providers help individuals create a crisis intervention plan that deceases ambiguity and promotes action during times of crisis (Daggenvoorde et al., 2018).

In a more long-term care format, an individual may find themselves in an intensive crisis rehabilitation center. These facilities provide cognitive-behavioral therapy as well as family-centered therapy to promote patient healing (McBee et al., 2019). Individuals can find a safe place to stay within these centers to recover, find support, and receive medical treatment as seen fit by their healthcare team. Individuals in an acute mental health crisis have many resources available to them such as crisis hotlines, crisis centers, emergency departments, and intensive crisis rehabilitation centers all build to help keep them safe.

References

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