



All nurses can support recovery from trauma

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The daily dissemination of global news with images of violence, suffering, and death is endless and overwhelming; yet the lived exposure to violence, sometimes accompanied by the loss of family members, housing, and adequate nutrition, can lead to long-term physical, emotional, and behavioral consequences. Substance use disorders, eating disorders, depressive disorders, obesity, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses have been linked to trauma. The most vulnerable to the long-term consequences of trauma are our children, whose physical and emotional development can be impacted.

Nurses are trusted professionals and make up more than half of the global health care workforce. According to the International Council of Nurses (ICN, 2022), psychiatric nurses make up the largest proportion of the mental health care workforce, yet severe mental health care shortages exist within most countries. Growing the workforce of psychiatric nurses and other mental health providers is important, but not sufficient. Nurses of any type, and in any setting, can improve patient outcomes by realizing the widespread prevalence of trauma, recognizing the socio-cultural and environmental context in which it occurred, and offering a safe compassionate space to discuss concerns. Normalizing discussions of mental, substance use, and social health reduces stigma and reduces the hesitancy to accept care and support from mental health professionals.

A trauma-informed approach to care emphasizes safety and patient-centered care whereby patients and families, when informed about care options, are empowered to express preferences and collaborate in treatment decisions. Recovery from trauma and associated disorders does not imply the absence of problems, but should reduce the likelihood of harm (SAMHSA, 2023). The goal of a trauma-informed

approach to care is to guide patients toward recovery, defined by improvements in symptom management, housing stability, engagement in meaningful activities, supportive relationships, and hope (SAMHSA, 2024).

To address the global mental health crisis, intersectoral collaboration among all stakeholders is essential. According to the WHO (2022), transformation requires deepening the value and commitment to mental health equity, reshaping environments, such as schools and workplaces, to include mental health access; and strengthening mental health care through community-based service networks, integration of services, and engagement of peers with lived experience. Most importantly, perhaps, would be a coming together of world health, political, and religious leaders to put a stop to warfare and mass traumatization.

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