

Topic Team Training – Mind your Mental Health

A community pharmacy environment that fosters teamwork ensured high levels of consumer satisfaction. This series of articles is designed for you to use as guide to assist your team in focusing on meeting ongoing CPD targets and to identify any training needs in order to keep the knowledge and skills of you and your team up to date.

The below information, considerations and checklist provides support to enable you to run a team training session and identify opportunities for learning within the topic of Depression.

Nearly everyone has felt depressed, sad, or down in the dumps at one time or another. Feeling depressed can be a normal reaction to a stressful event, such as when one suffers a loss or endures another of life's various struggles or stresses.

Sometimes, however, these feelings of depression can become intense, last for long periods (weeks or even months), and prevent a person from doing their normal day to day activities. This is what is known as 'major' or clinical depression. It is a serious medical illness that affects how someone feels, thinks and behaves.

Depression has a lot of features, but the most common are a deep feeling of sadness or a loss of interest or pleasure in activities which they previously liked doing.

These symptoms must be present for at least a few weeks before clinical depression can be considered as a possibility.

Other associated features include:

- Changes in appetite (generally a loss of normal appetite).
- Changes in sleeping pattern (generally reduced sleep).
- Loss of energy.
- Difficulty in thinking, concentrating, or making decisions.
- Irritability and restlessness.
- Feelings of worthlessness or of being a failure or bad person.
- Thoughts of death, of life not being worth living or of suicide.
- Physical aches and pains.

Consider:

- The common causes of depression and poor mental health, including lifestyle issues, medication and conditions that can cause depression
- How to spot depression in both colleagues and customers to get them the help they need
- The limitations and benefits of OTC medicines for depression
- The importance of good sleep hygiene for everyone
- Lifestyle issues that may cause depression, and tips on improving lifestyle
- The importance of regular food intake and sufficient exercise
- When to refer customers to the pharmacist.

Depression is a very common condition which affects 1 in 10 people at any one time, 450,000 people in Ireland alone. Any one of us, irrespective of age, gender or background can be affected. Recovery is possible, early recognition and ongoing support are key to a positive outcome.

Pharmacists are also on the frontline when it comes to the anxiety, depression and other mental health issues associated with Covid-19 infection, bereavement, worries about the global pandemic and the effects of public health measures such as quarantine (e.g. loneliness). While most pharmacies are incredibly busy, the importance of pharmacies' personal connections with their customers cannot be over-stated. Some people confide in pharmacists and pharmacy staff in a way that they rarely confide in anyone else. Even if time is short, it is worth remembering that a brief conversation with a customer can mean more than you will ever know.

"Pharmacists are also uniquely placed to provide advice about implementing public health guidance in people's day-to-day lives. Alongside this, it is important to re-emphasise positive health behaviours that are sometimes side-lined by Covid-19: maintaining a good diet, getting some sleep, trying to exercise, giving up smoking and cutting down on alcohol. People who are neglecting their physical or mental health might need to be directed to their GPs," says Professor Brendan Kelly, Professor of Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin.

The Psychosocial Response Project, currently underway within the HSE, has been working to highlight the different levels of support including online, phone and text as well as face to face that are available for the general public and for health sector staff.



Traffic to YourMentalHealth.ie has increased by almost 100%* since this time last year and almost 75% (73.6) has been from mobile which shows people are accessing the information whenever and wherever works best for them.

It is equally important that pharmacy teams are aware of effective colleague care and as such, are helping to look after the mental health of team members. Mental Health First Aid Ireland has published a series of free resources to provide support to those whose colleagues, family or friends are struggling with anxiety relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Providing mental health first aid in

Key Points:

Check your pharmacy team are aware and understand the following key points:

- The pharmacy team knows to be sensitive in dealing with customers who may feel vulnerable as a result of poor mental health
- The team knows which groups of customers are likely to be at risk of depression and other mental health conditions, such as anxiety
- My pharmacy assistants can meet the points in this training checklist.

the workplace can be challenging and with current social restrictions in place, there are some additional challenges facing employers, employees and those concerned about family, friends or neighbours.

Further Resources:

- YourMentalHealth.ie
- YourMentalHealth Information Line 1800 111 888

Actions:

- Ensure efficient sign posting to discreet consultation areas within the pharmacy for further help and advice
- Ensure that I know the recommendations for each OTC treatment which impact a customer's mental health
- Do any of us suffer from depression in the pharmacy team? Are some individuals more affected than others? If so, why?
- Are we confident about raising issues of depression and mental health with customers?
- Can we provide good advice on dealing with depression?
- Train the team to meet all the above considerations