Mental Health Disorders

2017 Civil Commitment
UNC School of Government

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NC statutes
- “...an individual who is mentally ill and either (i) dangerous to self, as defined in G.S. 122C-3(11)a., or dangerous to others, as defined in G.S. 122C-3(11)b., or (ii) in need of treatment in order to prevent further disability or deterioration that would predictably result in dangerousness...”

Presentation will focus on mental health disorders leading to
  Dangerousness to self
  Dangerousness to others
  Disability or deterioration that would result in dangerousness

Mental illness means...
- When applied to an adult, an illness which so lessens the capacity of the individual to use self-control, judgment, and discretion in the conduct of his affairs and social relations as to make it necessary or advisable for him to be under treatment, care, supervision, guidance, or control;
- When applied to a minor, a mental condition, other than mental retardation alone, that so impairs the youth's capacity to exercise adequate self-control or judgment in the conduct of his activities and social relationships so that he is in need of treatment.

Substance abuse means...
- The pathological use or abuse of alcohol or other drugs in a way or to a degree that produces an impairment in personal, social, or occupational functioning. "Substance abuse" may include a pattern of tolerance and withdrawal.

Psychotic Disorders
- Disorders of thinking and perceptions
  - Delusions: false beliefs
  - Hallucinations: false perceptions
- Include:
  - Psychotic Disorders
  - Delusional Disorder
  - Schizophrenia
- Schizoaffective Disorder
- Schizophreniform Disorder
- Brief Psychotic Disorder
- Substance/Medication-Induced Psychotic Disorder
- Psychotic Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition
- Unspecified Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorder

- Psychosis and danger to self
  - Risk of harm to self in context of delusions of doom
  - Risk of disability or deterioration due to:
  - Symptoms interfere with ability to care for self
  - Catatonia

- Psychosis and danger to others
  - Paranoid delusions can result in aggression towards others
  - Delusions of doom can result in harm to others as a beneficent act
  - Disorganization can result in unplanned aggression toward those trying to care for them
  - Victims of aggression usually family and friends, not strangers

**Bipolar Disorders**
- Disorders marked by severe mood swings that include emotional highs (mania and hypomania) and emotional lows (depression)
- Include:
  - Bipolar Disorder
  - Cyclothymic Disorder
  - Substance/Medication-Induced Bipolar and Related Disorder
  - Bipolar and Related Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition
  - Unspecified Bipolar and Related Disorder

- Bipolar Disorder and danger to self
  - Mania can lead to risk-taking and unsafe situations
  - Depressive phase can lead to suicidality
  - Increased risk in mixed states – combination of depressive and manic symptoms

- Bipolar Disorder and danger to others
  - Mania can lead to aggression when others try to control their behaviors or rein them in
  - Risk can be increased in the presence of psychosis

**Depressive Disorders**
- Characterized by persistent feelings of sadness severe enough to impact functioning
- Include:
  - Depressive Disorders
  - Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder
  - Major Depressive Disorder
  - Persistent Depressive Disorder
• Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
• Substance/Medication-Induced Depressive Disorder
• Depressive Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition
• Unspecified Depressive Disorder

• Depressive Disorders and danger
  o Usually danger to self in the form of suicidality
  o Aggression can occur in the context of lashing out in frustration
  o Risk can be increased in the presence of psychosis

• Self-harm
  o Coping skill or danger to self?
  o Context is important

Neurocognitive Disorders (Dementia)

• Symptoms
  o Memory impairment
  o One or more cognitive disturbances
    – Aphasia (language)
    – Apraxia (motor)
    – Agnosia (recognition)
    – Deficits in executive functioning
  o Deficits cause significant impairment and are a decline from previous functioning

• Alzheimers type
  o Most common – about 2/3 of dementia cases
  o Memory loss is usually most noticeable symptom
  o Amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles – “plaques and tangles”
  o Mixed (combination of Alzheimers and Vascular) often lumped into this category

• Lewy body type
  o Second most common at 10-15 % of cases
  o Often results in visual hallucinations
  o Can have a fluctuating level of cognitive impairment
  o Can respond poorly to antipsychotic medications

• Frontotemporal type
  o Frontal lobe responsible for executive functioning and inhibition
  o Characterized by personality changes, behavioral changes, and/or language impairment
  o Memory may be relatively preserved

• Vascular type
  o Caused by loss of blood flow to parts of the brain
    – Ischemic (blockage of blood vessel)
    – Hemorrhagic (bleeding)
  o Deficit is due to part of brain affected
  o Can be step-wise in nature

• Traumatic brain injury
- Deficit caused by direct result of physical injury and/or bruising
  - Usually not progressive
  - Potential for improvement
- Parkinsons and Huntingtons disease
  - Neurodegenerative disease with motor symptoms that can include cognitive symptoms
- Neurocognitive disorder due to a medical condition
  - Hepatic encephalopathy
  - Renal failure
  - HIV/AIDS
- Neurocognitive Disorders and danger
  - Aggression occurs in context of confusion and paranoia
  - Loss of inhibition can lead to verbal and physical aggression
  - Aggression usually focused on caretakers due to frustration or lack of understanding
- Commitment can occur due to:
  - Lack of capacity to consent to treatment (admission)
  - Risk of disability or deterioration
  - Usually a gradual and progressive condition, so commitment is less frequent

Other possible mental illnesses leading to commitment

Substance Use Disorders
- Alcoholic
  - Wernicke’s encephalopathy (acute) and Korsakoff’s psychosis (chronic)
  - Damage to mammillary bodies from thiamine deficiency
  - Confabulation can be a hallmark symptom
- Psychosis due to substance use leading to danger
  - Hallucinogens
  - PCP
  - Stimulants
  - Withdrawal

 Thoughts of killing others - criminal issue or psychiatric issue?
- If any indication of a psychiatric disorder, it may be worthwhile to pursue involuntary commitment so that an evaluation can occur (to determine presence of mental illness and causation)
- Consequences from criminal proceedings usually more severe than civil proceedings

Things to rule out
- Delirium
- Medical conditions mimicking mental illness
References