Increasing Mental Health Awareness Among International Students

NAFSA Region I Conference
October 21, 2015
Presenters

Apinant Hoontrakul

Ayumi Giampietro

Christy Babcock
Agenda

- Mental Health Issues – A Common Challenge
- Stressors, Myths and Stigmas, Warning signs
- Helping Students Seek Care
- Insurance Concerns
- Resources
- Examples and Discussions
Mental Health Issues – A Common Challenge

Almost 50% affected in the U.S.

Source: National Institutes of Health

450 million people affected

Source: World Health Organization
# Common Stressors for Intl Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Language Anxiety</th>
<th>Educational Stressors</th>
<th>Sociocultural Stressors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Daily routine (grocery shopping, bank etc.)</td>
<td>• Adjusting to the U.S. educational system</td>
<td>• Interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicating with professors and classmates</td>
<td>• Relationship with faculty/staff</td>
<td>• Peer pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coordinating a living situation</td>
<td>• Class participation</td>
<td>• Financial problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Troubleshooting</td>
<td>• Test anxiety</td>
<td>• Homesickness/ Culture shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asking for help</td>
<td>• Pressure to be successful</td>
<td>• Crises originating at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental Health Care – Underutilized

“International students who identified themselves as ethnically Asian were significantly less likely to use counseling services than other ethnic groups.”

Research focusing on Chinese international students found that only 4% of their sample ever used counseling services, even though 45% of them reported experiencing depression symptoms, and 29% reported anxiety symptoms. (Han, Han, Luo, Jacobs, & Jean-Baptiste, 2013)

Source: Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lusting, 2010
Boise State 2014-2015

- Used Counseling Services: 5.8% International, 5.9% Domestic
- Psychiatric: 0.5% International, 1.3% Domestic
- Medical (non-psychiatric): 23.0% International, 19.6% Domestic
Myths & Stigmas

- Saving face/Protecting honor
- Unsure about privacy/confidentiality
- Might hurt their visa status
- We might tell their sponsor
- Visit to counselor will be recorded in student’s school record
**Stigma - we've got it mapped**

**Regulations that stigmatisate people with mental health problems around the world**

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Until recently, laws prevented people with mental health problems from carrying out jury service or becoming a company director. This was only overturned in July 2013.

**LITHUANIA**

Some people with long term mental health problems are unable to own their own home.

**JAPAN**

A sign outside a museum in Japan reads ‘Those with mental disease are declined to enter the museum.’

In some areas, certain leisure facilities imposed restrictions on those with mental health problems, forbidding them to use the fitness centre.

**Anti-stigma campaigns**

- **New Zealand**
  - Like Minds Like Mine (mentalhealth.org.nz)
- **Australia**
  - Beyond Blue (beyondblue.org.au)
- **Scotland**
  - See Me (seemescotland.org)
- **England**
  - Time to Change England (timetochange.org.uk)
- **USA**
  - BringChange2Mind (bringchange2mind.org)
- **Sweden**
  - Hårkäll Närskall (harkall.se)
- **Canada**
  - Opening Minds (opentheminds.ca)
- **Catalonia, Spain**
  - Programa de Salud Mental (psm.cat)
- **Ireland**
  - See Change (seechange.ie)
- **The Netherlands**
  - Samen Sterk tegen Stigma (stentegenstigma.nl)
- **Denmark**
  - One of Us (one-of-us.dk)
- **Wales**
  - Time to Change Wales (timetochangewales.org.uk)

**KOREA**

In certain areas, people with mental health problems are not permitted to enter a swimming pool.

**ASIA**

Three major airlines in Asia refused to allow passengers with mental health conditions on to a flight unless they were accompanied by a psychiatrist.
How To Reduce Stigma

• Dispel the myths:
  ▫ Clearly define/describe what mental health is and what counseling is
• Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
• Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greet opportunities
• Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate with IS
• Have current students give testimonials
• Normalize students’ concerns and stress
• Creative ways of introducing counseling
Warning Signs

• Changes in Appearance
• Academic Problems
• Social Isolation
• Noticeable Changes in Mood
• Unusual or Odd Behaviors
• Threat to Harm Themselves or Others
Seeking Care

• On Campus Counseling Center:
  ▫ What school resources do you have on campus?
  ▫ Do students know when to go and where to go for what?
    ▪ Health center vs. counseling center vs. international student office
    ▪ Many IS feel more comfortable coming to an advisor first anyway
  ▫ What is your relationship with your counseling center?
Seeking Care

- Off Campus – No counseling center?
  - Helplines/Hotlines
  - Relationships with other providers
  - Language Support
Insurance and Mental Health

What is Legally Required?

Nothing!

Mental health insurance coverage is not required by the government for international students.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do the students’ insurance plans cover mental health?
2. Does the insurance company offer language support?
3. Do students realize that claims are confidential?
Resources In Your Community

- International Student Office
- University Counseling Services and Health Services
- Students
- Community cultural groups, “elders”
- Counseling program interns
Resources

NAFSA  www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/

BringChange2Mind:
www.BringChange2Mind.org

7CupsOfTea:  www.7cupsoftea.com

Pacific International Academy YouTube video on Speaking to Language Learner:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qdx_9jI8_MY

Mental Health Awareness Video Resource:
www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/mental-health-video.php
Resources - National Hotlines

- **National Suicide Prevention**
  - 1-800-273-TALK
  - [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
  - 1-800-SAMHSA-7 or 1-877-726-4727
  - [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

- **It Gets Better Project (LGBTQ)**
  - 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (866-488-7386) or 1-888-843-4564
  - [www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help also includes state specific resources](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help also includes state specific resources)
  - [https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ](http://https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ)

- **The National Domestic Violence Hotline**
  - 1-800-799-SAFE
  - [http://www.thehotline.org/](http://www.thehotline.org/)
Examples

- In-class presentation on mental health and counseling services
  - How to succeed as an international students in the U.S.
  - The importance of self-care
- An Example from Boise State
  - Pre-arrival
  - Orientation
  - Trained staff
  - CARE
  - Many touch bases with students
YOUR ROLE IS IMPORTANT!
Interactive Discussion

- What is your relationship with your Counseling Center?
- What tactics/programs do you use to increase awareness and reduce stigma?
- What are some new ideas discussed today that you might initiate at your institution?
- What are the barriers that you may face when implementing these ideas? What are possible strategies for working through these barriers?
Thank you!

• Apinant Hoontrakul: ahoontrakul@internationalstudentinsurance.com

• Ayumi Giampietro: aygiampietro@gmail.com

• Christy Babcock: cbabcoc@boisestate.edu
References