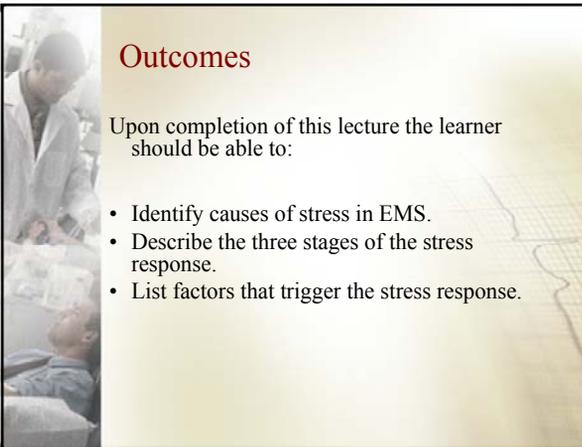


EMC 340 Introduction to Clinical Medicine

26 Stress Management

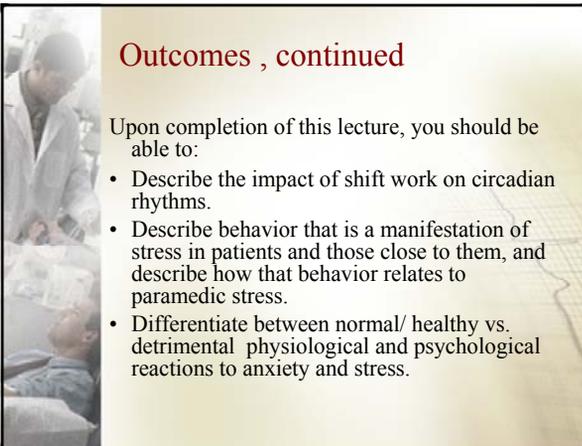
David Trigg, MD



Outcomes

Upon completion of this lecture the learner should be able to:

- Identify causes of stress in EMS.
- Describe the three stages of the stress response.
- List factors that trigger the stress response.



Outcomes , continued

Upon completion of this lecture, you should be able to:

- Describe the impact of shift work on circadian rhythms.
- Describe behavior that is a manifestation of stress in patients and those close to them, and describe how that behavior relates to paramedic stress.
- Differentiate between normal/ healthy vs. detrimental physiological and psychological reactions to anxiety and stress.



Well Being

The fundamental aspect of top-notch performance in EMS.

- A. Physical well-being
 - 1. Infections
 - 2. Injuries due to lifting
 - 3. Being around motor vehicles
- B. Emotional well-being
 - 1. Stress
 - 2. Fear
 - 3. Death, dying
- C. Elements of well-being



Stress and Stress Management

To manage stress:

- 1. identify your personal stressors.
- 2. identify the amount of stress you can take before it becomes a problem.
- 3. identify the specific stress-management techniques that work for you.



High Stress?

Indications or symptoms include:

- **Negativity**, irritability, and being argumentative and judgmental (“those idiots are too new at this to know much”)
- **Arguing** again and again with your spouse, chewing out your partner for little things.
- **Avoidance** behavior. Refusing to engage in normal social activities.
- **Tiredness** and dreading another overtime shift
- **Poor nutrition** because all you ate today was fast food.
- **Ailments** such as a stomachache, backache...



Stress

- *Stress* - hardship or strain, with a physical or emotional response.
- *Stressor* - the stimulus that causes the stress.
- Adapting to stress is a dynamic, evolving process.
 1. Defensive strategies
 2. Coping
 3. Problem-solving skills



EMS has Abundant Stressors

1. Administrative stressors
2. Scene-related stressors
3. Emotional and physical stressors



Learn Your Job-related Stress

1. Your personal stressors.
2. Amount of stress you can take before it becomes a problem.
3. Stress management strategies that work for you.



Three Stages Of Stress

1. Stage I: alarm: "fight-or-flight" phenomenon
2. Stage II: resistance: when individual begins to cope with stress
3. Stage III: exhaustion: prolonged exposure to the same stressors



Shift Work

Disruption of biorhythms of the body known as **circadian rhythms**. (Cycles that occur approximately every 24 hours)

- Hormonal and body temperature fluctuations
- Appetite and sleep cycles
- Other bodily processes
- Sleep deprivation for night workers



Night Work Sleep Deprivation

How to minimize stress if you sleep in the daytime;

- Sleep in a cool, dark place
- Do not attempt to (quickly) revert to a daytime schedule
- Unwind after a shift in order to rest well



Signs of Stress

1. **Physical**, such as nausea/vomiting, lack of coordination, fatigue
2. **Emotional**, such as anxiety, depression, desire to hide, anger
3. **Cognitive**, such as confusion, lowered attention span, poor concentration
4. **Behavioral**, such as withdrawal, unusual behavior, crying spells
5. **Burnout**



Detrimental Management

Can be detrimental if attempts provide a temporary sense of relief, but don't cure the problem.

- a. Substance abuse
- b. Overeating
- c. Chronic complaining
- d. Cutting off others and their support
- e. Avoidance behaviors
- f. Dishonesty about one's own health and well-being



Beneficial Management

Beneficial or healthy techniques

- Controlled breathing / conscious breathing
- Reframing the stress
- Attending to medical needs of your patient
- Taking care of yourself



Healthy Management

Healthy Techniques - Taking care of yourself

- Avoid “self-medicating” with drugs and food
 - Have a healthy fear of alcohol; try to quit smoking
 - Pay attention to diet / carbohydrates
- Learn positive thinking.
- Altered state: music, exercise, pleasure, prayer, meditation
- Learn guided imagery and progressive relaxation techniques.



Healthy, continued

Healthy Techniques - Taking care of yourself

- Create a *non*-EMS circle of friends.
- Take a real vacation or days off.
- Try to say "no" to offers of overtime shifts / extra classes.
- Do something you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Exercise regularly.



CISD

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Recent controversy regarding effectiveness
- Get individual counseling if indicated



Stress Management in the Future

Stress management strategies has to include:

- Problem analysis (*takes practice*)
- Learning your personal stressors
- Amount of stress you can take (*at this time*)
- Strategies that work *for you*



Stress Management in the Future

- Potential strategies:
 - avoiding overtime, pursuing outside interests, more regular vacations
 - reducing financial commitments
 - most of which are now more unlikely since you've enrolled in this class
- More realistic strategies might include:
 - Regular exercise, attention to diet
 - Focusing on positive thinking methods
 - Relaxation response



Summary

Continually assess:

- your personal lifestyle
- practices that affect your immediate future
- those practices that will affect you in old age.

Paramedics often find themselves in leadership roles:

- In the prehospital provider community
- in the community, at large.

Your health maintenance challenge is:

- **be well, so that you can help others be well.**
