

Mental health needs for landmine victims

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Every **30 minutes** someone, somewhere in the world is injured or killed directly or indirectly by a landmine. In Southeast Asia, a landmine accident happens **every day**, shattering lives, hopes and dreams.



Overview

- Counseling services at Mae Tao Clinic
- Landmine client profile
- Mental health needs for landmine victims and trauma medics
- Amputee support group
- Challenges
- Important things to remember
- Ways to improve mental health services for landmine victims



Counseling services at MTC (2)

- Counselors can help with:
 - Loneliness
 - No one to talk to
 - Worrying
 - Anger
 - Sadness, depression, hopelessness
 - Insomnia
 - Nightmares
 - Thoughts of suicide
 - Relationship problems
- Counselors can help by:
 - Listening to problems
 - Understanding problems
 - Helping to solve problems

Counseling is a conversation between a patient and a counselor to identify problems and plan for solutions



Counseling Services at MTC (1)

- Individual, family and group counseling, physical therapy, yoga, case management
- Clients include those who experience:
 - Emotional trauma
 - Alcohol and drug abuse
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Sexual abuse and rape
 - Domestic violence
 - Unwanted pregnancy
 - Parenting problems
 - Psychosis
 - Children's problems
 - Anxiety and depression
 - PTSD



Landmine client profile

- 200 new and replacement prosthetics clients/year at MTC
- Referred from Karen State
 - Soldiers and civilians
 - Vast majority are male
- Amputation at Mae Tao Clinic of Mae Sot Hospital
- Stay at MTC for 6 weeks for post-op recovery, then return to MTC after 6 months for prosthesis



Mental health needs for landmine victims (1)

- Injury and amputation affect a person's:
 - Body functions/sensation/appearance
 - Activities
 - Thoughts
 - Feelings
 - Connection to others
- Social consequences
 - Discrimination
 - Decrease in status
 - Poorer social functioning, isolation
 - No job
 - Poverty
 - Difficulties in relationships
 - Family problems



Mental health needs for landmine victims (2)

- Common feelings are:
 - Sadness
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Fatigue
 - Grief about their loss/injury
 - Hopelessness about the future
 - Low self esteem
 - Shame about their body
 - Nightmares
 - Powerless because of new dependence
- Common thoughts are:
 - I will never get better
 - I will never be able to do what I did before
 - I want to die
- Psychological consequences
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - PTSD
 - Body image
 - Sexual functioning
 - Phantom limb pain



Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is the process of restoring and improving function, mobility, and independence after illness or injury. It can help us heal physically and emotionally.

Rehabilitation can include:

1. Medical and wound care
2. Physical therapy and exercise
3. Counseling and social support



Stages of rehabilitation

- Surgery and post-surgical treatment
- Wound healing
- Recovery, preparing for prosthetic treatment
- Prosthetics
- Social re-integration
- Follow-up

Amputee support group (1)

- Who: Individuals with disabling injuries or amputation (patients and staff) and their family and friends
- What: Education, psychosocial support, physical therapy
- When: Saturday at 1:00 p.m.
- Where: Ask at the Counseling Center



Amputee support group (2)

- Aims to help the patient:
 - Understand the changes s/he is experiencing
 - Adjust to changes
 - Regain as much independence as possible
 - Connect the person with people who are or have been in the same situation
 - Work through the grieving process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, hope

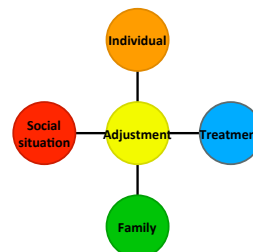


Amputee support group (3)

- Physical, psychosocial, and social support
- Help with the healing process
 - Healthy coping skills
 - Strong support network
 - Psychological support
 - Understanding, accepting and adjusting to life/ environmental changes
 - Resiliency



Influences on the adjustment process



Counseling messages to assist with adjustment process

- Phantom limb pain
 - Sit with a good posture to keep a good blood flow to the amputated limb.
 - Try to keep the end of your stump warm and protected, and avoid pressure on it.
 - Keep active.
 - Try to imagine you are exercising the amputated limb and see if that helps.
- Family/social
 - Increase contact with supportive family.
 - Tell and talk with your loved ones about your loss.
 - Communicate clearly about you what you need and don't need.
 - Accept support while remaining independent.
 - People want to help but often don't know what to do to support you.
 - Increase contact with supportive friends.
 - If your religion or spirituality is important to you, become more involved with it.

Mental health needs for trauma medics

- Common sources of distress:
 - Inadequate skills training
 - Isolation from families and home communities for extended periods
 - Fear of attack from Burmese soldiers
 - Threat of landmine injury, and the experience of forced displacement in early life.
- Management of stressors:
 - Peer- group interactions and support within medic teams
 - Social- and individual-centered coping strategies.
 - Setting personal and professional goals in relation to their families
 - Leadership aspirations

Lim, 2012



Support for trauma medics

Karen Department of Health and Welfare

- Mental health support trainings 1x/yr, 2-4 days
 - Team-building and communication strategies
 - Group discussion about individual psychosocial and somatic needs
 - Draw on personal stories to feel compassion and create a *survivor identity* over victimization
 - Explore coping mechanisms
 - Develop skills for self-care

Challenges

- Amputees do not always stay at the clinic during recovery
- Many amputees ask for help finding a job and are disappointed with “only counseling”
- Loss to follow-up



Important things to remember

- Amputees' disabilities make them more vulnerable to psychosocial problems, which will increase their disabilities.
- Cooperation between medics, technicians and psychosocial caregivers will improve their lives.
- Medics need support to work through their own trauma, especially as they work with others who experience trauma



Ways to improve mental health services for landmine victims

- Create a support group for amputees
 - Invite and encourage them to attend the amputee/injury group and other support groups
 - Encourage participation in social activities
 - Introduce them to other amputees at MTC, encourage them to visit each other
 - Explore ways they can enhance their support network
- Advocate for fair treatment of amputees
- Advocate for better services for amputees
- Teach others about amputation and its effects
- Stand up against people who discriminate against amputees

