Interactive, Anonymous, Web-based Screening: Implementation, Outcomes, and Data from Year One and Implications for Year Two

Outline

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Interactive Screening Program
- Evaluation and Data from Year One
- Lessons from Year One and Looking Forward
- Liability Issues and Strategies for Gaining Administrative Support

Touchstone Project

- Faculty Staff Trainings
  - Touchstone Basics (10-15 minutes)
  - Touchstone Resource (2.5 hours)
- Student Trainings
  - Touchstone Gatekeeper (1.5 hours)
  - Touchstone Social Network (12 hour)
  - Touchstone Peers (ongoing)
- Touchstone Web
  - AFSP's Interactive Screening Program
  - Counseling Center Website

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Touchstone Web: Implementing the Interactive Screening Program

- Kylie G. Cole, Ph.D.

Touchstone Web: Philosophy

- Lowers the barrier for access to services
- Reaches the students who do not come in
- Provides anonymity as a first step in help seeking
- Meets students where they are
  - Phones are old fashioned
  - Electronic communications dominate
  - Web is the resource of choice

Touchstone Web: Details

- Online ANONYMOUS depression screening
  - Rated as:
    - Tier 1(A & B)-- High Risk
    - Tier 2 -- Moderate Risk
    - Tier 3 -- Low Risk
  - Personalized Feedback
    - From Counseling Center clinician
  - Interventions offered:
    - Anonymous dialogue with counselor through secure website
    - Face to face counseling session
    - Referral to a campus partner
    - Meeting with a Touchstone Peer
    - Invitation or Self Referral
Touchstone Web: Implementation

- 200 email invitations, 5 times per semester
  - All incoming students
- Two clinicians per mailing
  - First session counselor is same
- Time commitment per clinician
  - 1 hrs/week (reading, responding, reports)
  - 2-3 hrs/week (clinical)

Counseling Center Web Page

Screening Tool

Email to Counselor

Questionnaire Excerpt

Clinician’s Response
Sample Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/01/2009</td>
<td>Small talk on Monday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/03/2009</td>
<td>Participated in the Student Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/05/2009</td>
<td>Met with students in the library to discuss the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try it out!

- AFSP has provided a test site: [http://afsp.perficient.com](http://afsp.perficient.com)
- Shows website as students see it
- Visitors can create a User ID and password, view and complete the Stress & Depression Questionnaire

Evaluation and Data from Year One

Daniela Veliz, Touchstone Graduate Assistant

Touchstone Web Data 2009

- Invitations: 1400
- Completed: 149

Touchstone Web Data 2009

- 23% came into Counseling Center
- 77% did not come

Touchstone Web Data 2009

- 36% engaged in an online dialogue
- 64% did NOT engage in an online dialogue
LESSONS LEARNED FROM YEAR ONE AND LOOKING AHEAD

Bethany C. Asquith, Touchstone Coordinator

Timing
- How many to send out?
  - Will I overload my clinical load?
- When to send them out?
  - Time of year/Day of week
  - What interval of time?
- What about breaks and holidays?
  - Coverage when clinical services are not offered

Clinician Comfort
- Comfort with the system
  - Knowing the steps and understanding what you can and cannot do
- Comfort with electronic communication
  - Generational differences?
- Comfort with non-traditional methods of counseling
  - How to communicate electronically
Faculty/Staff Response

- Relief
  - Another referral source
  - A place to send students who refuse to go to the Counseling Center

Dialogues: Challenges

- Students generally are...
  - choosing electronic dialogue over face to face meeting
  - comfortable sharing a LOT of information electronically
  - expecting that someone is "always there" to respond
  - desiring advice and opinions without giving a lot of info

- Tone is difficult to interpret in written format
- Clinician can feel pulled to 'do anything' to keep the student talking

Dialogues: Techniques

- The goal of a dialogue is to get the student to come in for an intake appointment.

  - Keep it short
  - Validate, de-stigmatize, universalize
    - Find out what is keeping them from coming in
    - DON'T question, interpret, and theorize
  - Boundaries around response time

Dialogues: Techniques continued

- Step into the professional role
  - Be specific about dates/times for appointments
  - Use 'professional opinion' to your advantage

- Do not offer unlimited continued dialogue
- Accept their decision to not come in
- Reach out again

Looking Forward to Year Two

- Target specific groups
  - Athletes
  - GLBT
  - International
  - Veterans
- Accessibility from Counseling Center website
- Training of Faculty/Staff/Students
  - Create cards with link

LIABILITY ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR GAINING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Douglas P. Johnson, Ph.D.
General Thoughts

- 1100 suicides per year
- Only a tiny percentage suicides involve law suits
- Families are usually very willing to accept mistakes made when trying to give reasonable care
- They don’t accept it as easily if the university does not see the problem

Tort Law

- Special relationship creates a duty
- Counselors have a special relationship
  - Therefore “duty” must be reasonable practice
- States will differ on definitions of “special relationship”
- “Actual knowledge” and “foreseeability” cannot be second hand.

Tort Law

- Voluntary Assumption of Duty
  - A student has a problem
  - The university recognizes the problem
  - The university offers help to the student
  - The help offered is poor care and results in the death of the student

Jain v State of Iowa

- Suicide Plan disclosed to Residence Life Coordinator
- RLC advised:
  - Go to the Counseling Center for help
  - Go home for the Thanksgiving Break
  - Tell Parents
  - Phone me (RLC) at home if help is needed
- Student did not tell parents and carried out plan after the break
- Nothing the University did increased the risk to the student.

Stanton v USM

- We had a special relationship and had a duty and had a right to go to court
- She was let to live in the dorm before the semester
- She hadn’t been told of the rules
- She lived in the dorm, let a stranger in and was raped
- The case was settled out of court, so the facts were never tested

Risk and Liability

- The judge decides, based on the law, whether a “special relationship” and “duty” exist
- Facts are relied on to determine whether you breached your duty
  - Jury or judge decides based on facts
We Want to Help

- We are aware that
  - 85% of those who suicide have not sought help
  - Suicidal students usually don’t tell anyone
  - If they do tell, they tend to tell peers
  - We are using ISP to address the problem
  - Because we want to help, please don’t hold us to creating a “duty”

ISP “protects” the University

- Anonymity is a protection because we have no special relationship that creates a “duty”
- Decrypting the email would encroach upon creating a “duty”
- Decrypting the email does not provide specific information
- The fact that we are aware of a problem and trying to address the problem is thought to create some degree of “immunity”

Getting Buy-In for Prevention

- Faculty see suicide prevention as a worthy goal
- Show everyone how they contribute to suicide prevention by promoting a sense of “belonging” and “purpose”
  - Social Justice v Belonging
- Joiner’s theory is approachable, easy to understand and has evident face validity

Touchstone Project Philosophy

- Thomas Joiner
  - Why People Die by Suicide (2005)

Engaging students IS suicide prevention!

- Educational opportunity and success contribute to social justice, belonging and purpose
- Faculty who teach and inspire students promote “protective factors”
- Staff and administrators who take the time to listen, help solve problems
- Importance of all staff: custodians and dining staff
- Peers who care, don’t exclude, and who will speak up and engage

Common Sense Tactics

- Create a Student Behavioral Review Team
- Make Friends (lunches, workouts, attending events)
- Tailor presentations to faculty to their context
- Invite your friends to participate on Advisory Council
- Lean on your friends to get you into meetings
- Frame the project in words that fit the audience
- Make handouts brief and postable
- Hand them out at meetings—don’t send them
Questions?

Thank you for participating!