

MENTAL HEALTH IN FARMING

WHAT ARE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MALE FARMERS IN THE CONTEXT OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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Introduction:

World Health Organization (2007) describes mental illness as any disturbances of emotional equilibrium as manifested in maladaptive behaviour and impaired function, caused by genetic, physical, chemical, biological, psychological, social or cultural factors. There is a significant upward trend in mental health issues such as suicide, depression, anxiety and psychosis in farmers all over New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2012).

Countries all over the world are becoming dependent on their agricultural sector for serving their populations; so farmers often prioritize keeping their land, stock and physical assets in good condition before looking after themselves (Firth, Williams, Herbison, & McGee, 2006).

Clinical Issue:

In 2010 the suicide rate for people living in urban areas was 11.1 per 100,000 people compared to rural areas where there was 16 per 100,000 suicide deaths (Statistics New Zealand, 2012) Furthermore, Chief Coroner Judge Neil McLean reiterates this, reporting that 14 farmers in New Zealand have taken their lives from July 2014 to January 2015 (Edmunds, 2015).

Mental health in farming is becoming a major health issue in rural areas within our country and nurses can play a major role in education and raising awareness to reduce these horrific statistics.

Implications for Practice:

- Risk of decreased confidentiality in small communities
- Stigma associated with seeking mental health care
- Decrease number of health care professionals remaining in rural health sectors.

Factors Identified Within the Literature that Influence Poor Rural Mental Health in Males:

- Isolation
- Stoicism
- Climate, natural disasters
- Fluctuating economy (New Zealand dollar, increasing interest rates, increase input costs)
- Variability of weather patterns
- Government regulations
- Poor access to mental health services

Alston & Kent, (2008) and Edmunds (2015)

Recommendations for Practice:

- Retaining of health professionals in rural sectors by DHB's
- Increase in education for rural health professionals in regard to mental health illnesses
- Raising awareness through social media to decrease the large stigma associated with mental health and break down barriers.

Conclusion:

Current research indicates that without further attention to rural men's health and the factors that make them particularly vulnerable, they will be left isolated and unsupported, in danger of adding to the suicide statistics.

Farmers need to be made aware that although they are at the front line of producing the most vital part of New Zealand's economy and most dominant income, that their own health is significantly more important (Fraser, Jackson, Judd, Komiti, Murray, & Robins, 2006).

References:

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PECOT Category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	Rural male farmers at risk of mental health issues	Literature explains that male farmers mental health issues (e.g. suicide) are greater than males from rural areas (Berry, Fragar, Hogan, Owen, & Rickwood, 2011), and that more women than men have been reported to seek help for their mental health issues (Judd, Fraser, Grieve, Gomez, Jackson, Komiti, & Murray & 2006). Research also shows that rural men have higher suicide rates compared to men in the general population (Roy, Jbilou, Oliffe, Robertson, & Tremblay, 2013).
Exposure (intervention)	Male farmers with mental health issues living in a rural area	I will be looking for articles that discuss the experience of males and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, suicidal ideation through the themes of stoic male, isolation and economic burden.
Comparison/ Control	Males living in rural areas experiencing mental health issues compared to urban areas	I am interested to find out whether there are more mental health issues in males living in rural areas compared to males living in urban areas and why this occurs.
Outcome	To determine the reasons that increase farmer's risk of experiencing mental health issues and reasons why my population are more hesitant in seeking help compared to women.	The aim of this review is to further develop understandings of rural male behaviors and how these findings can be utilized effectively.
Time	N/A	I have not included a time frame as I believe all farmers timelines of mental health issues are specific to them

Rationale as to why I chose the Poster:

Due to mental health in rural farming areas being a recently increasing concern for New Zealand, it has raised particular concern for rural and mental health organizations. As I student nurse, I am extremely passionate to make a change, raise awareness, and enhance education to communities to prove how serious mental health in farmers is becoming in New Zealand and that we need to support and help those who may be experiencing it. Therefore, I have decided to create a poster to visually raise awareness to members of rural communities on how big this health issue is within New Zealand. Currently there are various campaigns within New Zealand that are producing programmes that look at the wellbeing of the farmer (Walker, 2012). Therefore, I believe there is already the knowledge out there that mental health in farming is an increasing health issue within New Zealand and thus, there is a greater need to raise awareness visually to members of the community to try and get this point across. I believe I am able to utilize the Ottawa Charter by designing a poster to captivate my ideas as I feel a visual stimulus is the best way to implement health promotion for this specific health issue.

References:

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