Tick-Borne Diseases and Mental Health
Submitted by: Sharon P. Austin, PsyD

Currently, tick-borne diseases (TBDs) are the fastest growing vector-borne diseases in the USA. Statistics on Lyme disease, the most prevalent TBD, estimate over 300,000 new cases of Lyme every year in the US alone, with some estimates up to one million/year, and 40% of these are children. This is not including all the possible co-infections (e.g., Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis and Bartonella), which are also transmitted by ticks. The Lyme pathogen has been reported in all 50 states.

We must therefore anticipate many of our clients who have either moved from high endemic areas with TBDs, or have traveled to such areas have a greater likelihood of having contracted a tick-borne disease unknowingly. Without early detection TBDs can evolve into multi-stage and multi-systemic illnesses that mimic and/or coincide with many medical and psychological conditions. Two of the primary symptoms are chronic pain and fatigue. “Chronic” TBDs wreak havoc on couples, families and individuals. Mental health practitioners can play a critical role in helping clients and their families navigate the complexity of these diseases.

The challenges faced by clients with TBDs are daunting. Examples include:

1.) Chronic TBDs are often not routinely considered a common or legitimate medical condition. This means unlike chronic conditions such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, clients often do not receive adequate support from their practitioners, friends, family, or employers.

2.) Thus far, there is no known reliable test for the various strains of the Lyme pathogen (Borrelia burgdorferi) and the co-infections.

3.) Outdated beliefs and myths have a negative effect on treatment. These myths include:
   - Lyme disease testing is reliable
   - Lyme disease is hard to catch
   - Lyme disease is easily treated
   - One can feel a tick bite
   - Lyme disease always presents with a bull’s eye rash

4.) TBD symptoms may not be apparent for weeks, months, or years. The early symptoms may appear flu-like and are typically dismissed. Undetected pathogens can proliferate throughout the body.

5.) Because of the complexity of the symptom profile from one individual to another and no standard treatment protocol that works for everyone, treatment at various stages of the disease can be unaffordable with or without insurance and have mixed results. Recovery is often complicated and confusing. It is a long road of misdiagnosis and failed treatments for many with TBDs.

6.) Financially, TBDs can be devastating from loss of employment, denial of insurance, and disability and cost of treatments. One estimate of the financial burden is $1.3 billion/year in medical costs but could be as high as $50-100 billion drain on the US economy per year.

Chronic TBDs can cause a wide range of symptoms with relapsing/remitting patterns. Frequently reported physical symptoms include: joint and muscle pain, facial nerve palsy, carditis (can be deadly), headaches of all types, sleep disturbances, visual impairments, neuropathic pain syndromes, extreme fatigue, meningitis, recurrent fevers, chills and night sweats, sensory sensitivities, especially to light and sound, dizziness, low blood pressure, gastrointestinal disorders, increased susceptibility to autoimmune conditions, and long-term neurological disorders such as Alzheimer’s.

“Neurological Lyme” is particularly problematic for children and adults alike. Symptoms under this category can include any of the above physical symptoms concurrent with reduced functioning in the following areas: speech and language skills, memory and concentration, multi-tasking abilities, word-finding, irritability, new onset ADHD, anxiety, panic and OCD, oppositional defiance, “brain fog”, information processing, comprehension, depression, mood swings, suicidal ideation, declining school performance, and inability to tolerate typical school or work settings.

Clinical studies suspect possibly one-third of psychiatric clients show signs of past infection with the Lyme pathogen. As psychotherapists, we can provide a vital role for these clients as we may be the first to detect the possibility of TBDs as a cause of psychiatric conditions.
Connections

Program Manager
Kristen Cochran-Ward
kcochran@healthdistrict.org

Operations Specialist
Emily Leetham
eleetham@healthdistrict.org

Mental Health Specialists:
Michelle Clark
Adult Team Supervisor
mclark@healthdistrict.org

Tasha Steinbach
tsteinbach@healthdistrict.org

Fabiana Di Camillo
fdicamillo@healthdistrict.org

Jenna Raymond
jraymond@healthdistrict.org

Heather Truschel
htruschel@healthdistrict.org

Stephanie Anziano
sanziano@healthdistrict.org

School Liaison
Sharon Kreider
skreider@psdschools.org

Child Psychologist
Marybeth Rigali-Oiler
mrigalioiler@healthdistrict.org

Community Navigator
Lindsey VanZant
lvanzant@healthdistrict.org

Care Coordinator
Megan Winick
mwinick@healthdistrict.org

Care Coordinator
Ana Pasini
apasini@healthdistrict.org

CAYAC Program Assistant
Tara Gilstrap
tgilstrap@healthdistrict.org

Admin. Phone: 970-530-2883
970-221-5551 (Adult)
970-221-3308 (CAYAC)

Web: www.mentalhealthconnections.org

Submissions printed in Connections do not necessarily reflect the views of the Connections Program. Our editorial staff do not check the credentials of individuals wishing to submit groups or other listings. If you have concerns regarding credentials or other issues, please contact the group leader or author of the article directly. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer information on community happenings of interest to mental health and human services providers and updates on services available through the Connections Program. Thank you.

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Given the likely epidemic of TBDs, we could ask additional questions when there are confusing, numerous and waxing and waning symptoms. These include:

- Have you been outdoors in a known tick environment, especially high endemic areas?
- Have you lived in or traveled to high endemic areas?
- Have you ever been bitten by a tick? How often?
- Did you have a rash? Treatment?
- Do you have a positive family history of TBDs? Neighbors/friends?
- Medical/psychiatric history that uncovers sudden onset symptoms?

For clients with chronic TBDs, we must be aware of dual diagnoses between psychological and medical conditions. Their presentation may be more than their trauma histories driving the physical symptoms. It may be more than “schoolitis” or problematic parenting. We have been trained to recognize how trauma resides in our bodies and how critical attachment experiences are. Yet we must be willing to look at an even bigger picture that includes the role of infections such as those transmitted by ticks.

Although we cannot advise on medical or nutritional treatment, we can counsel clients on factors that may be exacerbating their physical and emotional conditions. We can help clients be accountable to many wellness factors such as regular medical check-ups, good nutrition, exercise and sleep hygiene, challenging negative thoughts, and maintaining healthy relationships.

All of these factors are critical for clients with chronic TBDs. We can also facilitate communication amongst providers. Most of all, as Terry Tempest Williams says so beautifully:

“The unexpected action of deep listening can create a space of transformation capable of shattering complacency and despair.”

We are trained to listen, be a witness, stay attuned and be patient for our client’s story to unfold. In a time of numerous doctors, multiple assessments resulting in inconclusive diagnoses, uncertain medical treatments and outcomes, clients of all ages with chronic TBDs need our comforting presence and our message, “I believe you and I’m with you!”


Dr. Sharon Austin is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in couples, trauma, chronic medical conditions, and equine-assisted therapy. She is a volunteer for the CO Tick-Borne Diseases Awareness Association (COTBDAA). She is a Mom of two college students and co-hobby farm owner with her husband, tending to their horses, sheep, dogs, and chickens. Dr. Austin can be reached at spaustin2@gmail.com or 970-493-4093.
Job Opening

UCHealth’s Community Health Improvement Department is seeking a Licensed Behavioral Health Specialist to join the MACC program full time.

The MACC (Medicaid Accountable Care Collaborative) program provides intensive, community-based care management, support and services to high-risk, high-complexity, and/or high-utilization Medicaid patients who struggle to meet their own health care needs.

The MACC Licensed Behavioral Health Specialist manages a case-load of (primarily) adult clients, and provides outpatient support focused on coordinating and meeting the patient’s medical and behavioral health care needs. The MACC Behavioral Health Specialist (BHS) also works to connect clients to relevant community resources while addressing barriers to care.

This licensed BHS position does have a small capacity to provide direct clinical counseling services to program clients on a limited basis, as well. The interdisciplinary MACC team is comprised of RNs, case managers/care coordinators, licensed behaviorists, and admin and outreach support staff.

The full job description and how to apply can be found at https://careers.uchealth.org/job/UCHDA005N22398/Lic-Behavioral-Health-Spec-MACC.

Resources for the Professional

Office Space Availability

Large professional office for sublease in the Drake Office Park. Spacious, private, professional office available immediately for sublease! IDEAL for ANY professional seeking a secure, quiet, private office. Available furnished or non-furnished. Access to shared waiting room, storage room with refrigerator, microwave, and secure file cabinets. Access to printer/fax. Must provide own internet, phone service. Easily accessible with plentiful on-site parking in quiet, well-managed, office park. Great central Fort Collins location! Elevator and handicap access. Square footage is 180 usable sq. ft. /207 rental sq. ft. (includes common shared space in waiting room). All inclusive (gross lease) rent is $650 per month ($350 deposit). Tenant signage available on front door, lobby marquee and in professional office park. For more information or to make an appointment to see space, contact Lisa Kurth at 970-482-7771 or by email at alpinebtc@yahoo.com.
Assisting Individuals in Crisis and Group Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention is NOT psychotherapy; rather, it is a specialized acute emergency mental health inter-
vention which requires specialized training. As physical first aid is to surgery, crisis intervention is to psy-
chotherapy. Thus, crisis intervention is sometimes called “emotional first aid”. Designed to present the 
core elements of a comprehensive, systematic, and multi-component crisis intervention curriculum, this 
course will prepare participants to understand a wide range of crisis intervention services for both the 
individual and for groups. Fundamentals of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) will be outlined 
and participants will leave with the knowledge and tools to provide several group crisis interventions, 
specifically demobilizations, defusings, and the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD). The need for 
appropriate follow-up services and referrals when necessary will also be discussed. This 3-day course 
combines ALL of the content of ICISF’s Assisting Individuals in Crisis & Group Crisis Intervention courses.

Program Highlights:

- Psychological crisis intervention
- Resistance, resiliency, recovery continuum
- Critical incident stress management (CISM)
- Evidence-based practice
- Basic crisis communication techniques
- Common psychological and behavioral crisis reactions
- Putative and empirically-derived mechanisms
- SAFER-Revised model
- Suicide intervention
- Relevant research findings
- Large group crisis interventions
- Small group crisis interventions
- Adverse outcome associated with crisis intervention
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

When: December 12th-14th (Wednesday thru Friday) 8:00am-5:00pm   Where: UNC Loveland Center at Centerra

Cost: $200 (Scholarships available if needed)

Continuing education credits available. Space is limited. To register, contact Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org or by phone at 970-530-2883.

Connections’ Adult Team has moved! Join us for an open house!

When: Tuesday, November 6th, 3:30-6:00pm

Where: 425 W. Mulberry Street, Suite 101
       Fort Collins, CO 80521

Light refreshments will be served.
EMDR Basic Training consists of Weekend I and Weekend II Training. Each training event is three days of didactic and supervised practice.

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) Weekend I Training Objectives:
- Identify 3 components of the EMDR approach designed to provide effective treatment with clients
- Describe 3 important existing research studies [more than 20 randomized studies support the effectiveness of EMDR therapy]
- Name the 8 phases of EMDR for comprehensive treatment and how to implement the phases with clients
- Identify the parameters treatable with EMDR to safely and effectively implement EMDR with clients
- Describe 3 aspects of the AIP Model for effective case conceptualization and treatment planning
- List 6 types of client complaints treatable with EMDR
- Describe the criteria for client selection and how to apply to client cases

Hosted by: Community Reach Center

Dates: Weekend I — November 9-11, 2018
Weekend II — TBD

Location: Community Reach Center
1870 W. 122nd Avenue
Westminster, CO 80234

Cost: $445.00 for both weekends (fee does not include consultation)

For more information or to register, contact Lori Pereira at 303-853-3772 or by email at l.pereira@communityreachcenter.org.

*To complete Trauma Recovery/HAP’s EMDR Training, each participant is required to complete 10 hours of consultation. Each participant/agency must arrange for consultation hours on their own, through the HAP Consultant Directory. All consultants MUST BE registered on the HAP Consultant Directory.

For more detailed information on Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR).
http://www.emdr.com/what-is-emdr/

Answers to Training Questions are available online at Trauma Recovery/HAP’s Website:
http://www.emdrhap.org/content/events/answers-to-training-questions/

Please click on the link below to get to the training schedule in order to register for this event:
https://www.emdrhap.org/content/events/training-schedule/
Resources for the Community

**LGBTQIA+ Teen Group**

**BE YOU WITH US!**

This group is all about providing a safe and affirming place for teens (12-15 years old) who are questioning and exploring their identities as an LGBTQ+ youth. Our goal is to help them learn the tools to navigate the difficulties of being an adolescent who identifies as being LGBTQIA+ and help them feel their process is respected.

**When:** Fridays, 5:00-6:30pm

**Where:** 3500 John F. Kennedy Pkwy, Ste. 200  
Fort Collins, CO

**Cost:** $40/session (reimbursable by most insurance plans)

**Facilitator:** Alyssa Wright, LCSW—Colorado Center for Assessment and Counseling

To learn more or to join, call 970-889-8204.  
You can also visit [www.coloradocac.com/beyouwithus](http://www.coloradocac.com/beyouwithus).

**Secondary Survivor Workshop**

Those affected by sexual assault shouldn’t have to recover alone. Neither should you. Join SAVA for a workshop for partners, family, and friends of sexual assault survivors. (For ages 18+)

Topics include: What is trauma? How can I help? What about me? And more!

**Dates:**

Monday, November 19, 2018 from 3:00-6:00pm  
Thursday, December 13, 2018 from 3:00-6:00pm  
Thursday, January 24, 2019 from 3:00-6:00pm  
Tuesday, February 26, 2019 from 3:00-6:00pm

**Workshop classes are also held in Spanish:**

Tuesday, December 4, 2018 from 4:00-7:00pm  
Tuesday, February 5, 2019 from 4:00-7:00pm

**Location:** SAVA Center  
4812 S. College Avenue  
Fort Collins, CO 80525

**Cost:** Suggested $20 contribution

Space is limited. To RSVP, contact Stephanie Torres at [stephanie@savacenter.org](mailto:stephanie@savacenter.org) or by phone at 970-472-4204.
The Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Connections (CAYAC) team is offering a three-part ADHD parent education workshop for parents with children ages 6-13. This workshop series is intended to provide education, guidance, and concrete strategies for parenting a child with ADHD.

Each session is 1 hour long and attendance at all sessions is recommended. Every family attending will receive a copy of the parenting strategies book *Mindful Parenting for ADHD* by Mark Bertin, MD. Lunch will be provided.

Topics include:
- Overview of the brain science behind ADHD and how to use that information to inform parenting style
- Learn how to assess for and build on your child’s strengths in light of their challenges as a child with ADHD.
- Learn strategies for addressing unwanted behavior or acting out at home.
- Learn how to support your child in living up to their fullest potential
- Learn how to address social and interpersonal difficulties your child may be having due to ADHD
- Learn how to support your child in achieving academically
- Learn how to work with the school to ensure your child is getting the supports (if any) they need

**Dates:**
- Wednesday, November 7th, noon-1:00pm
- Wednesday, November 14th, noon-1:00pm
- Wednesday, November 28th, noon-1:00pm

**Location:** CAYAC office  
1302 S. Shields Street, A1-3, Fort Collins

**Cost:** $20 per family for the entire three-part series

Space is limited. To learn more or to register, contact Ana Pasini at 970-530-2842 or by email atapasini@healthdistrict.org.

**Dialectical Behavior Skills Training Group**

In this group, members will acquire skills that help them to achieve balance between accepting themselves and changing what they can to improve their quality of life. Participants will learn *Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance,* and *Interpersonal Effectiveness.*

**When:** Fridays at 1:30pm.

**Facilitator:** Rebekah Knight-Baughman, PhD

To inquire further, please contact Rebekah at rikbaughman@yahoo.com.
### Stepping More Fully Into Your Life

This group for women will explore issues of vulnerability, connection, and belonging using sacred practices including ceremony, art, writing, and sharing in the Way of Council circle tradition. Experience the healing power of being seen and heard!

**About the group facilitator:** Corynne Hilbert, MSW, LCSW has been working with groups for over 20 years. Corynne is trained in nature-based therapy and shamanic practices.

**Nature retreat:** Saturday, November 3rd from 9:00am-5:00pm. Retreat will take place near Masonville.

**Groups:** Two Tuesdays per month for 5 months from 5:15-7:15pm. Groups will meet in Fort Collins.

**Cost:** $575

For more information, call 970-372-7001 or reach Corynne by email at efwcounseling@gmail.com. You can also visit www.empowermentfromwithin.org.

### Calling all Dads!

You think you’ve seen the hardest job out there?! Let’s get real. How about parenting?

Join The Youth Clinic for an evening of connection, humor and practical advice about being the best dad you can be. (Sharing is optional)

**When:** November 7th
7:00-8:30pm

**Where:** Maxline Brewery
2724 McClelland Dr., #190
Fort Collins, CO

All dads are welcome, and bring a friend! Father of children with unique/special needs are especially encouraged to attend.

### QPR Suicide Prevention Training

Connections is offering QPR training, which stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer. QPR is an hour-long suicide prevention training for community members, which covers warning signs, how to talk with someone who is suicidal, and local resources to refer to.

**Upcoming training dates:**
- Wednesday, November 14th, noon-1:00pm
- Tuesday, December 4th, 5:30-6:30pm

**Location:**
Health District of Northern Larimer County
120 Bristlecone Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80524

To register for a QPR class, please contact Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org or call 970-530-2883.