Outline

• Definition
• Socioeconomics and Learning Disabilities
• Crime and Prison Population
• Prison Integration
• Information processing deficits
  – Input, integration, storage, output
• Specific learning disabilities
  – Reading, writing, math
• Diagnosis
Outline

- Treatment and Intervention
- Impact
- Importance of Identification
- Strategies to Improve Communication and Patient Outcomes

Think about how this potentially impacts your interaction with patients
Definition: Learning Disabilities

• Heterogeneous group of disorders that affect a range of academic and functional skills
  – Speaking
  – Listening
  – Reading
  – Writing
  – Spelling
  – Reasoning
  – Organizing information
Definition

• 15% of the population has a learning disability
• Up to 50% of the prison population has some type of learning disability
• Not indicative of low intelligence
• Average to above average intelligence
• Deficit in the processing of information
• Discrepancy between a person’s apparent capacity to learn and his level of achievement

1994 Washington Summit on Learning Disabilities
Socioeconomics and Learning Disabilities

- High risk neighborhoods and poor living conditions
- Socio-economic indicators: poverty, subdivided housing, lower adult educational attainment
- Rely more heavily on public assistance/welfare because of lack of education
Crime and the Prison Population

- Students with learning disabilities are more likely to:

  - HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY
  - RECEIVE POOR GRADES
  - REPEAT A GRADE
  - DROPOUT
SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

RISK OF CHALLENGING AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOR
Path to Behavioral Problems

- Ignored or chided
  - Offending/negative remarks
    - Harassment
      - Bullying
      - Act out
      - Slide into behavior problems

Education system did not address needs
Learning Disabilities: Sub stance Abuse, Education, Employment

• Up to 60% of adolescents in treatment for substance abuse have learning disabilities
• 35% of students with learning disabilities drop out of high school
  – This is twice the rate of their nondisabled peers
• 62% of learning disabled students were unemployed one year after graduation

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Learning Disabilities and Criminality

- 31% of adolescents with learning disabilities will be arrested 3-5 years out of high school
- 50% of juvenile delinquents tested were found to have undetected learning disabilities

1994 Washington Summit on Learning Disabilities
Learning Disabilities and Criminality

- 20% of the prison population have some form of learning disability
- Half of the prison population have literacy difficulties (seventh grade reading)
- 2/3 of all prisoners are below seventh grade in numeracy
- 4/5 are below seventh grade in writing

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Prison Integration

• Ridicule and harassment by guards and other inmates
  – Protocol of conduct > memory
  – Highly regimented > memory
  – Answer on command > retrieval of information
  – Taken advantage of > unable to “see big picture”

• Little privacy
  – More difficult to hide/compensate
  – Schoolyard mentality- do not want to be different

• Filling out forms to access care > write and spell; convey correct information
Prison Integration

• Buy goods at the canteen > math
• Do not take advantage of opportunities to learn new jobs in order to hide deficits > cannot fulfill tasks
• Paroled > inability to read/write can affect housing and job opportunities
Information Processing Deficits: Input

- Information perceived through sense (visual and auditory perception)
- Visual: difficulty recognizing shape, position, size of items
- Auditory: difficulty screening out competing sounds in order to focus on one of them
Information Processing Deficits: Integration

- Interpretation, categorization, sequencing of input
- Unable to tell a story in the correct sequence
- Unable to memorize sequences of information (days of the week)
- Unable to generalize concepts
- Unable to see the “big picture”
Information Processing Deficits: Storage

- Short-term/working memory: difficulty learning new material without many repetitions
- Long-term memory
Information Processing Deficits: Output

- Spoken language: answering a question on demand (retrieve information, organize thoughts, put into words)
- Motor ability: Gross and fine
Specific Learning Disabilities

• Reading Disability
  – Most common
  – Difficulty with word recognition, word decoding, reading rate, comprehension
  – Ex: dyslexia

• Writing Disability
  – Handwriting, spelling, organization of ideas, composition

• Math Disability
  – Dyscalculia
Diagnosis

• School psychologists, clinical psychologists, neurophysiologists
• Intelligence testing, academic achievement testing, classroom performance, social interaction and aptitude
• Academic performance is not commensurate with cognitive ability
Treatment and Intervention

• Skills can be improved with targeted interventions
• Mastery model
• Direct instruction
• Classroom adjustments
• Special equipment
• Classroom assistants
Impact on Affected Individuals

- Shame - poor literacy, attention or memory difficulties
- Fear of failure, criticism, ridicule, rejection
- Fear of discrimination
- Fear others will think they are stupid
- Left out of everyday discussions due to lack of understanding
- Depressed
- Alone
- “Learned helplessness”
Importance of Identification

- “Second chance” in learning and employment
- Reduce re-offending
- Prison education should recognize approximately 50% of inmates will need support
  - Screening, direct teaching, appropriate educational and vocational training
Education in Prison

Reception Center Processing

- TABET Testing (Grade Level)
- Mainline
- GED
- Fail
- Job

- Mental Health Services (Developmental Disabilities)
- Mainline ≠ Reception Center
- Fail Job
Should CDCR Screen for Learning Disabilities?

- Right to education
  - Do prisoners have the same rights to accommodations?
- Outcome measures for cost/benefit analysis:
  - Vocational training in prison and upon release
  - Reduce parole violations
  - Reduce rates of recidivism
Strategies to Improve Communication and Patient Outcomes

• Do not make assumptions about a person’s ability to communicate or the way in which they do it
• Face the person directing when speaking
• Rephrase sentences rather than repeat
• Communicate in writing or with pictures, if necessary
Strategies

• Ask if any particular assistance is needed
• Offer to read written information when appropriate
• Give clear instructions (ex: “Take 1 pill of each of the 2 BP medications in the morning and 1 diabetes medication pill in the evening” rather than “Take all your medications as indicated”)
Strategies

• Listen patiently and avoid completing sentences for the person unless he looks to you for help
• Don’t pretend to understand
Summary

• Not indicative of low intelligence
• Deficit in the processing of information
• Discrepancy between a person’s apparent capacity to learn and his level of achievement
• Skills can be improved with targeted interventions
Summary

• “Second chance” in learning and employment
• Reduce re-offending
• Prison education should recognize approximately 50% of inmates will need support
QUESTIONS?