Let’s talk about mental health

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Rural Areas Have The Highest Suicide Rates And Fewest Mental Health Workers

There isn't a single psychiatrist in 65 percent of nonmetropolitan counties, and there's no psychologist in almost half of them.

By Eleanor Goldberg

American Farmers Confront a Mental Health Crisis

Bloomberg  Mario Parker. Bloomberg  •  March 20, 2019
Goals for today...

Understand factors that impact mental health in rural communities

Recognize the signs and symptoms of distress

Learn strategies and resources to help yourself or someone else
An Example...

Ben and Lois have been ranching for 15 years. The last few years, they have struggled financially. If prices are low again this year, they could lose the ranch. Ben has always been known as a responsible and outgoing member of the community. But now, under this level of financial stress, he looks tired and withdrawn. He’s been forgetting appointments, neglecting his livestock and skipping church.

Examples from Weigel and Penny – University of Wyoming
~2 million farms
Average size is 444 acres
97% operated by families
2% of US population

Data from 2017
Net farm income and net cash farm income, 2000-19F

Note: F = forecast.
Data as of March 6, 2019.
Wisconsin Farm Incomes Expected To Decline Again In 2018

Corn, Dairy, Cranberries, Beef Producers All Expected To Face Tight Margins

By Hope Kirwan
Published: Tuesday, February 27, 2018, 6:00am

Midwest farm bankruptcies on the rise, with Wisconsin leading the way

Jan Shepel, Correspondent  Published 8:05 p.m. CT Feb. 25, 2019

Note: F = forecast.
Data as of March 6, 2019.
Farming is a High Risk Profession

Number of Fatal Injuries

- Construction: 1000
- Transportation and warehousing: 800
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting: 600
- Manufacturing: 200

Farming is a High Risk Profession
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Rate of Fatal Injuries per 1000 workers

- Construction
- Transportation and warehousing
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting
- Manufacturing
Wisconsin
Rate: 21.2
Number: 1,177
Scope of the Crisis
Share of Americans who have been directly impacted by the opioid epidemic:

45% Rural adults
74% Farmers and farm workers

Access to Opioids and Opioid Treatment
3 in 4 farmers say it would be easy for someone in their community to access a large amount of prescription opioids or painkillers without a prescription, and just under half of rural adults – 46% – say the same.

Only 1 in 3 rural adults say it would be easy to access treatment for addiction to prescription drugs or heroin in their local community...

...and, only 2 in 5 are confident they could seek care that is either effective, covered by insurance, convenient or affordable.

68% Increasing public education surrounding resources
57% Reducing the shame or stigma around opioid addiction
Mental Health Provider Shortage Areas by County 2017

Occupational Suicide Rates/100,000 for Farmers/Ag Workers and All Occupations, 1992-2010

Suicide Rate/100,000

1.20

1.00

0.80

0.60

0.40

0.20

0.00


Farmers/Ag Workers

All Occupations
What are common stressors for farmers and their families?
Physical Reaction to Stress
Physical Reaction to Stress
Signs/Symptoms of Stress

**Physical:** headaches, ulcers, backaches, eating problems, sleeping problems, frequent sickness, exhaustion

**Emotional:** sadness, depression, bitterness, anger, anxiety, loss of spirit, loss of sense of humor

**Behavioral:** irritability, acting out, passive-aggressive, anger, increased drinking, taking drugs, isolation, violence

**Cognitive:** memory loss, lack of concentration, difficulty with simple decisions

**Self-worth:** feeling like a failure, can't do anything right, not able to fix things

Signs/Symptoms of Chronic Stress

- Change in routines
- Care of livestock declines
- Increase in farm or ranch accidents
- Appearance of farmstead declines
- Children show signs of stress

So what do we do?

Reduce the stigma associated with mental health

Talk about it

Find resources
Managing Your Stress

• Relax your muscles/Deep breathing
• Slow down
• Take a break

• Exercise/Physical Activity
• Eat well
• Talk about your problems – reach out to people in your social network

• Make time for hobbies
• Speak with a mental health professional
• Eliminate your triggers
How can you help others?

• Take time to listen
• Be non-critical and non-judgmental
• Be empathetic
• Try to help the individual think logically and rationally
• Encourage the individual to get back into a routine of doing things
• Learn to recognize the signs of stress
• Follow-up!
This sounds like a lot to manage. How are you coping with this? (What are you doing to take care of yourself?)

Would it be helpful if we work together on an action plan for how to manage your concerns?

Every situation is different. In a similar situation on a farm they tried. What do you think about that?

Are there people who have been helpful or supportive when times have been tough in the past? Are any of those people able to help now?
Raise your hand if...

(Wait until all questions are asked)

You have ever thought about suicide?
You know someone who has?
You know anyone who has made a suicide attempt...
...or died by suicide?
You’re worried, right now, that someone you know is thinking about suicide?
Suicide Warning Signs

Direct Verbal Cues

To friend: “I’ve decided to kill myself.”

To doctor: “Is this enough medicine to kill myself?”

To banker: “If you foreclose, you’ll be seeing my obit next week.”

To pastor: “I’m going to end it all.”
Suicide Warning Signs

**Indirect Verbal Cues**

To son: “Don’t be surprised if I die in a tractor rollover.”

To friend: “If I should pass away, I want you to have my old Winchester 12-gauge”

To banker: “What happens to my debt if I die?”

To daughter: “You’ll need to look after your mother when I am gone.”
Asking Someone About Suicide

Ask directly:

Are you having thoughts of suicide?
Have you thought about hurting yourself or others?
Do you have a plan?

Asking directly does **NOT** increase the risk of suicide and may provide the person with relief that someone asked about their struggles.

**What if someone says yes?**

Do not leave them alone.
Call for help and/or take them to a hospital or healthcare provider.
National Resources

Farm Aid Hotline
If you need to talk to someone directly, Farm Aid is here to listen. Farm Aid’s Farm Advocate, Joe Schroeder, and other Farm Aid staff answer the hotline Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. eastern time.

(800) FARM-AID / (800) 327-6243

Request Assistance

National Suicide Hotline
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

(800) 273-TALK / (800) 273-8255

Suicide Prevention Hotline
Finding and Choosing Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) Treatment Programs

https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide/aoda.htm

Employee Assistance Programs
Mental Health in Rural Communities Toolkit

Welcome to the Mental Health in Rural Communities Toolkit. The toolkit compiles evidence-based and promising models and resources to support organizations implementing mental health programs in rural communities across the United States, with a primary focus on adult mental health.

The modules in the toolkit contain resources and information focused on developing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining rural mental health programs. There are more resources on general community health strategies available in the Rural Community Health Toolkit.

If you or your organization would like to get involved with promoting Mental Health Awareness Month, please visit https://gpcah.public-health.uiowa.edu/mental-health/.
Training Resources

Mental Health First Aid (https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/)
- Michigan State University Extension Program

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) (https://qprinstitute.com/)

MSU Extension provides powerful tools

Communicating with Farmers Under Stress
The “Communicating with Farmers Under Stress” workshop is geared for agricultural professionals who work with farmers and their families. Building awareness of stress triggers, signs of stress, and helpful techniques for responding to stress are a focus of this workshop. Techniques for identifying, approaching and working with farmers who may not cope with stress effectively and learning what community resources are available to farm families rounds out this training.

Weathering the Storm: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset
The “Weathering the Storm: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset” workshop is specifically for farming families to help build skills in identifying stress signs and symptoms, strategies for managing stress, finding out where to access community resources and making an action plan for managing stress.
In conclusion...

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Agricultural Safety and Health: The Core Course
June 10-14, 2019
UI College of Public Health Building, 145 N. Riverside Drive, Iowa City, IA, 52242

Networking Reception - Monday, June 10, 2019 - 4:00-6:00 pm

The Agricultural Safety and Health Core Course has been the national model of effective agricultural safety and health education for over a decade. Expert instruction is provided by experienced faculty and specialists including Board Certified Physicians, Veterinarians, and Certified Industrial Hygienists.

Course Includes
- Interactive Activities
- Safety and Rescue Demonstrations
- Classroom Instruction
- Farm Tours
- Research Poster Display
- Case Studies
- Panel Discussions
- Producer Perspectives

"Learning this subject matter by people in the field carried so much weight. I got a perspective I had little experience with."
- Physician

"Amazing program, high quality content."
- Health educator and farmer/rancher

"Very good program, learned many things I didn’t know."
- Veterinarian

"I will certainly recommend this program to health care professionals."
- Pharmacist