PROJECT INFORMATION

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Effect of Integrating Mental and Physical Health on Patients' Experiences of Care

Principal investigator

Bill Wright, PhD

Organization

Providence Portland Medical Center

What was the research about?

Behavioral health integration, or BHI, is when clinics manage both physical and mental health care in the same place. The goal of BHI is to improve the coordination of services to better meet patients' needs.

In this study, the research team wanted to learn if BHI improved patients' experiences of care. The team looked at clinics that were using BHI and scored them on staff training, how well staff work together, and other aspects of BHI. Then the team looked at whether clinics with higher scores had better

- Patient-reported experiences of care
- Patient-reported experiences of being judged, or stigma, in a healthcare setting
- Quality of care

The team also looked at whether patients who felt stigma were less likely to get their healthcare needs met.

What were the results?

The study didn't find a relationship between clinics' scores on BHI and patients' experiences of care or of stigma. In addition, overall scores on BHI didn't relate to clinics' quality of care. But the study found that

- Patients receiving care from clinics that had higher scores for training staff on BHI had fewer unnecessary emergency room visits.

- Clinics with higher scores for how well staff worked together did a better job of monitoring patients who took medicine for six months or longer.
- Clinics with higher scores for integrating their financial systems for physical and mental health services did a better job of following up with patients and monitoring those who took medicine for six months or longer.

Also, patients who experienced stigma were more likely to report that they didn't get their healthcare needs met.

Who was in the study?

The study included 2,524 adult patients receiving care at 1 of 12 clinics in Oregon. Of these, 88 percent were white. The average age was 53, and 68 percent were women. In addition, 52 percent of patients had a mental health condition. All patients lived in Oregon and had a commercial, Medicaid, or Medicare Advantage insurance plan.

What did the research team do?

Staff at each clinic completed a survey. The survey asked about ways the clinic integrated physical and mental health care, including training and overall cooperation in managing the two kinds of services.

Patients completed a survey about their healthcare experiences during the study's first year and again one year later. The survey asked how quickly patients got care, if the care was hassle free, and whether people felt stigma when they went to the clinic. To assess the

quality of care that patients received, the research team looked at health records for 20,279 patients at the clinics.

Then the research team looked at the relationship between clinics' scores for BHI and patients' experiences.

A patient advisory team gave input on the study.

What were the limits of the study?

All clinics in the study used BHI. Results may differ if the research team had been able to compare clinics that were using BHI with those that weren't.

Future research could compare patient experiences of care at clinics using BHI with clinics not using BHI.

How can people use the results?

Healthcare clinics can use these results when planning ways to help patients improve their mental and physical health.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Wright172.