

Paper in a Panel

Title: Participatory practice based research for improving clinical practice from the ground up: The integrated care evaluation project

Authors: James Fauth (presenter), George Tremblay, & Amy Blanchard

Abstract

Aim: RCTs have shown that systematically integrating behavioral health services within primary care settings can result in improved clinical outcomes, but these benefits have yet to be demonstrated absent the (temporary) infusion of financial support and researcher control that characterize RCTs. This project reduces this knowledge gap by exploring the allocation, effectiveness, and cost implications of integrated care under naturalistic conditions; the extent to which the aforementioned are moderated by the severity, chronicity, and/or functional impairment associated with patients' emotional distress; and the power of driving practice-based data into stakeholder-driven quality improvement initiatives.

Method: A practice based participatory research strategy has been used to 1) engage key stakeholders; 2) describe the integrated care models; 3) identify high priority research questions; 4) conceptualize four project phases (planning, pilot, baseline, quality improvement); and 5) implement the first two phases. Currently, each clinic is tracking the emotional distress, medical care (including psychotherapy), and other relevant medical indicators of a "high utilizing" patient population over time. Emotional distress is being measured with a 17-item self-report derived from the Patient Health Questionnaire; other data are derived from existing medical databases.

Results: Results from approximately 400 - 600 primary care patients will be provide an initial description of the allocation and effectiveness of integrated care as sustained in naturalistic settings.

Discussion: Results will be discussed in light of the preexisting RCT evidence on integrated care, as well as in terms of the costs and benefits of conducting more participatory forms of practice-based research.

Keywords: Research methods, practice based evidence, participatory research, integrated care