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Integration of behavioral and mental health care into primary care clinics: a program evaluation

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Fragmentation of physical, mental, and chemical dependency care delivery systems has led to significant gaps in care for individuals with severe mental illness and substance use disorders. A shifting international focus to chronic illness and the default provision of mental health care demands new approaches. In the US, the rise in numbers of those identified with mental health conditions has risen, while the resources to care for those patients have declined, creating a gap in service to a vulnerable population. This DNP project is a program evaluation of an integrated behavioral health and mental health program provided by a patient centered medical home primary care clinic. This DNP Project's purpose was to evaluate the impact of the implementation of integrated behavioral and mental health services within a primary care clinic on patient's adherence to the treatment plan, staff and patient experiences and cost of care for patients with severe mental illness. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected 12 months prior to and after the program change which included the addition of a licensed mental health expert and workflow adjustments. Upon completion of data collection and analysis, results showed that the integration of mental health into primary care has had a positive impact on patient adherence to treatment, patient satisfaction and staff satisfaction.

Biography

Paulette Sides Sasser has completed her Doctorate in Nursing Practice with a focus on the integration of mental health into primary care systems. This project level program evaluation includes three components: Context Evaluation; Implementation Evaluation and Outcome Evaluation. Post doctorate work includes the implementation of the recommended quality assurance program and associated pilot studies, development of new staff education instruments and recommendations for innovative staff roles to address the most commonly cited barrier to full integration identified by extensive literature search of international publications. This will be the first implementation of a complete integration program in New Mexico, USA. Additional expertise relevant to this submission includes management of community mental health clinics and psychiatric emergency services, and provision of clinical specialist services at University of New Mexico Hospitals.

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