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Improving heart health in behavioral health patients with a history of trauma through an integrated care program

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There is an established association between trauma and high blood pressure. The Sunset Terrace Integration and Recovery (STIR) Program is a SAMSHA grant-funded initiative that addresses the physical health of those with serious mental illness, providing medical and mental health screenings 3 times over 12 months and free health classes to those interested. To date, 504 patients have enrolled and/or completed the 12 month program. The sample is 80% Hispanic, 70% female and over 18 years old ($n=457$). 55% out of the patient sample reported a history of trauma or violence in their baseline interview when asked, "Have you ever experienced violence or trauma in any setting (including community/school violence; domestic violence; physical, psychological, or sexual maltreatment/assault within or outside of the family; natural disaster; terrorism; neglect; traumatic grief)?" We also made an 'overall trauma score' to quantify the severity of traumatic stress symptoms such as feeling numb and detached from others, having nightmares and avoiding situations that remind them of the trauma. There was a significant, positive correlation between patients' BP and their overall trauma score ($r=0.068$, $p=0.02$). Those who reported trauma also reported significantly lower social functioning ($M=3.36$, $SD=0.876$) at baseline than those without a history ($M=3.7$, $SD=0.878$); [$t(245)=-3.057$, $p=0.002$]. By 12 months, a paired samples t-test showed that those with a history of trauma had improvement in systolic blood pressure ($t(67)=2.264$, $p=0.02$) and diastolic blood pressure ($t(68)=2.025$, $p=0.047$). An improvement in LDL ($t(68)=2.51$, $p=0.014$) was also observed from BL ($M=86.42$, $SD=51.3$) to 12 months ($M=62.28$, $SD=60.1$). These findings provide preliminary support that integrated care services may serve as a beneficial care model to treat comorbid psychiatric and medical conditions for patients, especially those with a history of trauma or violence.

Biography

Serena Bonomo completed her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from New York University College of Arts and Science in 2017, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors in Psychology Research. She is currently works at NYU Langone Sunset Terrace Family Health Center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where she assists in operating a 4-year, SAMSHA grant funded program to improve cardio metabolic health in behavioral health and psychiatric patients. She has a passion for helping patients who have experienced trauma and will continue to pursue this interest in her graduate psychology program at NYU beginning in the fall of 2018.

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