Improving Access to Psychiatric Health Care Through the Use of Telepsychiatry

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Project Purpose
The Office of Health Disease and Health Promotion has made access to mental/psychiatric healthcare as one of the main goals of Healthy People 2020 campaign. The purpose of this project is to:
- Highlight the importance of providing quality, safe, and secure access to psychiatric healthcare.
- Show that improved access to care through telepsychiatry may decrease the burden placed on emergency departments and in-patient psychiatric facilities.

Problem / Background / ROL
National
There are approximately 44 million people in the U.S. that have a mental illness. Of these only 19.2 million seek treatment.

Regional
In the southeast region Georgia is ranked number one for having the highest need and the second lowest in access to psychiatric healthcare.

Local
For Floyd county, psychiatric healthcare is ranked the 9th highest in the state for emergency department related visits.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework
Ace Star Knowledge Model of Transformation

Methodology
Data concerning psychiatric presentations to the emergency department was collected 30 days prior, 30 days during, and 30 days after the telepsychiatry project. The project consisted of three phases.

Phase I
Gather the quantitative data on all psychiatric presentations to the ED.

Phase II
Administer the “Telepsychiatry Survey” and supply the telepsychiatry phone number to non suicidal/homicidal psychiatric patients.

Phase III
Gather the quantitative data on all psychiatric presentations to the ED since supplying the telepsychiatry phone number.

Results 30 days Prior, During, and After the Telepsychiatry Project
- For the 30-day period before the telepsychiatry project there were 190 psychiatric presentations.
- For the 30-day period during the project there were 203 psychiatric presentations.
- For the 30-day period after the project there were 174 psychiatric presentations.

Results of Telepsychiatry Survey
- 162 psychiatric presentations (111 were suicidal/homicidal + 51 non suicidal/homicidal)
- 51 patients were deemed eligible for the telepsychiatry survey.
- 21 of the 51 patients chose not to participate leaving 30 patients.
- 11/30 (36.6%) reported that they did have access to telepsychiatry.
- 19/30 (64%) reported that they did not have access to telepsychiatry.
- 16/30 (53%) reported that having access to telepsychiatry would have prevented their presentation to the ED.
- 14/30 (47%) reported that having access to telepsychiatry would not have prevented them presenting to the ED.

Results / Evaluation Findings During Project Period
- 53% of the patients surveyed felt having access to telepsychiatry would have prevented their presentation to the ED.
- 47% of the patients surveyed felt having access to telepsychiatry would not have prevented their presentation to the ED.

Clinical Relevance
- The population that will be studied are the non-crisis psychiatric patients.
- Non-crisis patients are those not homicidal or suicidal.
- The sampling procedures that will be used is purposive sampling without replacement to collect quantitative data.

Practice Implications / Discussion
- More education needs to be provided for psychiatric patients concerning telepsychiatry.
- More education needs to be provided for healthcare providers and healthcare staff concerning telepsychiatry.