

Improving Mental Health in Primary Care Clinics for Rural and Underserved Populations

Rural patients with complex mental health conditions who get collaborative care do just as well as those who receive specialty care via telemedicine

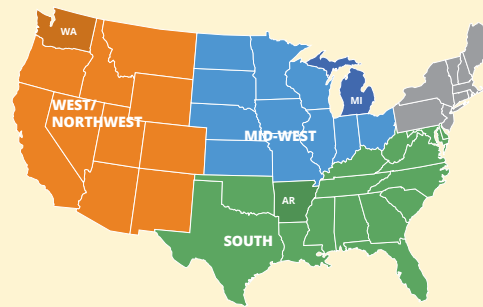
The problem:

While there are highly effective treatments for PTSD and Bipolar Disorder, CHC patients do not have access to these treatments. Every CHC is located in an underserved areas with almost half in rural areas. Most do not have psychiatrists or psychologists practicing on site.

The solution:

Providing effective treatment for PTSD and Bipolar Disorder in Community Health Centers (CHCs) can improve quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Study To Promote Innovation in Rural Integrated Telepsychiatry (SPIRIT)



Conducted in **24** Community Health Centers in Washington, Michigan, and Arkansas

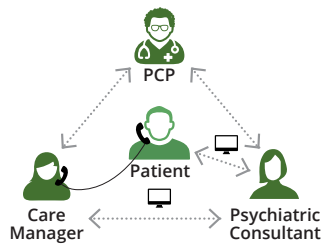
1000+ patients enrolled who screened positive for post-traumatic stress disorder and/or bipolar disorder

The Research Question

Is it better for off-site mental health specialists to support primary care providers' treatment of people with PTSD and Bipolar Disorder through an integrated care model or to use telemedicine technology to facilitate referrals to offsite mental health specialists?

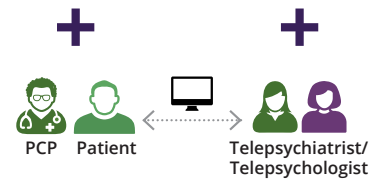
Telepsychiatry Collaborative Care

Patient care was managed by a Primary Care Provider (PCP) and a care manager (nurse or social worker) in **consultation with a telepsychiatrist from the state medical school.**



Telehealth Enhanced Referral

Telepsychiatrist and/or telepsychologist from the state medical school were credentialed and privileged to practice at the CHC and assumed responsibility for the patient's mental health care.



Characteristics of CHC Patients Screening Positive for PTSD and/or Bipolar Disorder

RACE/ETHNICITY



POVERTY STATUS



PRESCRIBED PSYCHOTROPIC MEDS



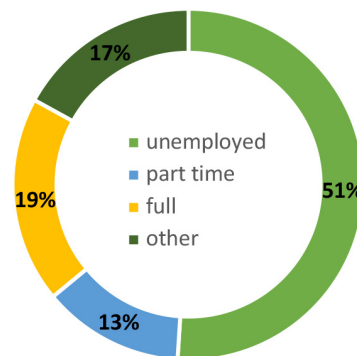
AT RISK ALCOHOL USE



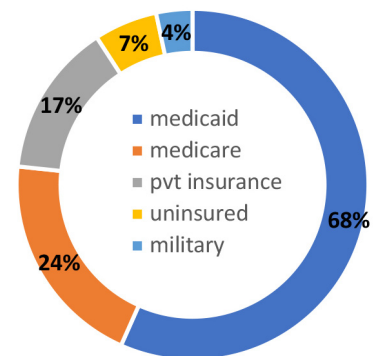
ILLICIT SUBSTANCE USE



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



INSURANCE STATUS



Outcomes: Significant Mental Health Improvement

Both groups showed significant improvement with treatment and telepsychiatry collaborative care was as effective as referral to telepsychiatry and telepsychology. Measured improvement from baseline to 12 months across all symptoms.

PTSD Symptoms Improved:
26%–35%



Depression Symptoms Improved:
26%–30%



Anxiety Symptoms Improved:
21%–27%



Mood Stabilized:
17%–19%



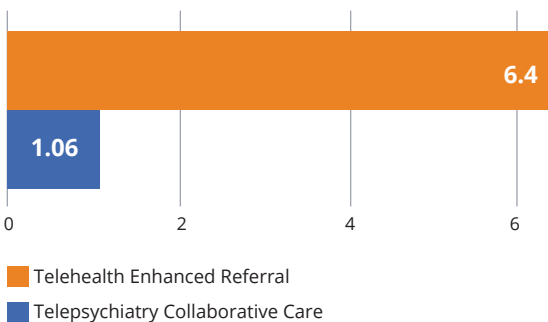
Mental Health Functioning Improved:
26%–29%



Efficient Use of Mental Health Resources

- Access to psychiatrists and psychologists is a barrier to treatment
- Telepsychiatry collaborative care utilized less specialist time including fewer psychiatry visits.
- Telepsychiatry collaborative care improves access by using this scarce resource more efficiently than telehealth enhanced referral.

Average Telehealth Encounters Per Patient



Collaborative Care Works For Primary Care Providers: Their Own Words

"These are my patients. With telepsychiatry collaborative care, my patients were seeing me regularly for medication refills, and then we had ready access to telepsychiatrist care through the care manager, to call down and see how the telepsychiatrist might suggest changing medications and getting an occasional consult."

Bipolar Disorder

"I learned how underdiagnosed bipolar disorder is. And I'm starting to now see that in several more patients where I probably would've never even thought to look for it. That's opened up my eyes a huge amount to treating mental disease and looking for other diagnoses because bipolar is so hidden within depression."

PTSD

"My prescribing practices now mimic the telepsychiatric consultant. There is a level of comfort now where I would be comfortable starting some medications for PTSD while waiting to try to transition and get further help. Even just to simply try to recognize and diagnose is much more comfortable now."

Experience the SPIRIT Telepsychiatry Collaborative Care Team in Yelm, Washington

Video (6 Minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbceq-W2oqo&feature=youtu.be>

Study Results will be available July 2021: clinicaltrials.gov

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION....

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REFERENCES

Fortney JC, Veith RC, Bauer AM, et al. Developing Telemental Health Partnerships Between State Medical Schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers: Navigating the Regulatory Landscape and Policy Recommendations, *Journal of Rural Health*, 35(3):287-297, 2019 (**Article of the Year**) <https://doi.org/10.1111/jrh.12323>

Cerimele JM, LePoire E, Fortney JC, et. al. Bipolar Disorder and PTSD Screening and Telepsychiatry Diagnoses in Primary Care. *General Hospital Psychiatry*. 65 (July-August): 28-32, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jrh.12523>

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