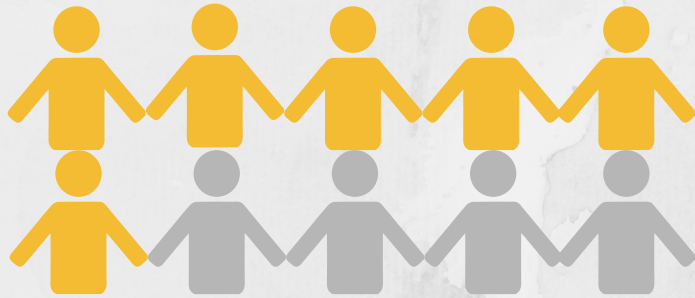


The American Mental Health Crisis: Calling Attention to the Psychiatric Shortage

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Six in ten Americans are currently seeking or wanting mental health services



One in four Americans reported having to choose between mental health services and daily necessities

BACKGROUND

Mental health is one of America's most concerning health epidemics to date affecting 56% of Americans (The National Council, 2018). Although stigmas against mental health have significantly reduced, with 76% of Americans recognizing its importance, we are still seeing a massive barrier to access. The National Council reports that 74% of Americans do not believe mental health services are accessible to everyone (2018). The main factors reported for preventing access to mental health services were:

- Costs or lack of insurance coverage
- Long waits
- Limited options/Lack of geographically close locations
- Lack of awareness of how to get treatment
- Social stigmas still disproportionately affect youth

THE PSYCHIATRIC SHORTAGE

America is experiencing a shortage in the supply of Psychiatrists as the current workforce ages out. Newer generations are reluctant to take on the profession for several reasons.

- Low reimbursement rates by insurance and Medicaid
- burnout due to psychiatric shortage
- burdensome documentation procedures and restrictive regulations makes it difficult for psychiatrists to coordinate care with other health professions (NCBH, 2017)

A survey by the National Council for Behavioral Health revealed that during three years, psychiatry losses increased from an average \$481,000 in 2013 to more than \$550,000 (2017). When reimbursement rates are lower than the cost of care, as seen by these data, psychiatric inpatient units are often forced to close, further diminishing the prospects of new psychiatry hires.

EXCELLENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH ACT (2014)

Section 223 of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act selected eight states (Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon and Pennsylvania) to participate in a new standard for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). Under the act the selected CCBHCs were required to meet new standards for staffing, governance, and the provision of a comprehensive range of behavioral health services. In return, the CCBHCs anticipated costs for cooperation were met through an equivalent Medicaid reimbursement rate. (Miskowiec, 2017)

Results

- Of the participating CCBHCs a total of 1,160 new staff were hired.
- The CCBHCs experienced up to a 25 percent increase in the amount of patients they could serve

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?



The Consequences of the Psychiatric Shortage

- Reduce appointment times from 45 or 30 minutes to as little as 15 minute sessions
- Rationing psychiatric services to patients with the most severe illnesses, leaving patients with mild-to-moderate behavioral health conditions without treatment
- Long wait times, delaying treatment to weeks or months after first request of need
- Reduction or elimination of medication management by extending prescriptions from 30 days to 60 or 90 days
- Lack of comprehensive behavioral training leads to inadequate diagnosis and overprescribing of antipsychotics (NCBH, 2017)

LOOKING FORWARD

While considering the previously mentioned areas of improvement, potential solutions areas follows:

Expanding the Psychiatric Workforce

An emphasis on recruitment of psychiatrists will be extremely important moving forward. The National Council reports that "high recruiting schools" all shared a strong reputation in its psychiatry department and staff. In addition, expanding the federal funding for GME resident positions and prioritizing them to rural and underserved communities could be a solutions as it is these communities who suffer from the psychiatric shortage (NCBH, 2017).

Telebehavioral Health Care

Telebehavioral Health Care is a new innovative solution to expand the reach of mental health care and addiction services to rural or underserving populations. The method capitalizes on technology to increase reach and help reduce travel time and expenses for both parties (NCBH, 2017). The consequence of telebehavioral health care is the loss of face-to-face consoling, however no alarming research has surfaced suggesting this has significant impact on care.



Support the passage of the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act reintroduced this year. This Expansion would add eleven new states to the program and extend the CCBHC demonstration for the already participating eight states for another two years. You can do so by contacting your Member of Congress and urging them to support of this act.

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