

Barriers and Facilitators to Integrating Behavioral Health in Primary Care Settings

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Introduction

Few behavioral health researchers have utilized photovoice methodology in studies exploring barriers and facilitators to integrating behavioral health in primary care settings. The use of photovoice, an innovative participatory action research methodology, gives behavioral health service providers the opportunity to explore and define for themselves, through photography and narration, their perceptions about the integration of behavioral health services (Wang, 2006). This study explored the perceived barriers and facilitators to integrating behavioral health care in primary care settings among 17 social work, mental health counseling, and school counseling students. Suggestions to overcoming such barriers to key stakeholders at a community gallery showing.

Methods

Photovoice methodology was employed in this study. The study took place between 2018-2020. Seventeen research participants were given cameras and asked to capture photographs of barriers and facilitators to integrating behavioral health in primary care settings. Participants discussed their photographs with the researchers during a focus group. A total of five focus groups were conducted, lasting in duration from 1-1 1/2 hours. Each was audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Constant comparative analysis was employed to analyze the data. Qualitative analysis software Nvivo9 was utilized to assist in data reduction and for the generation of themes across the data.

Results

Barriers

- Transportation
 - Rural access
 - Geriatric population
 - Young children
- Stigma
 - Schools-space and privacy
 - Cultural views
- Competency
 - Cultural competency
 - Collaboration with involved parties
 - Knowledge of psychiatric medications and DSM 5
- Need for Services
 - Location
 - Shortage of behavioral health providers
 - Funding
- Time
 - Limited number of appointments available
 - Hours of operation
 - Schools - miss class time

Facilitators

- Convenience
 - Location of services
 - Space/privacy
 - Flexible scheduling
- Education
 - Informed clients
 - Informed behavioral health and primary health care providers
 - Cultural education
- Money/Funding
 - Increased access to care
- Collaboration
 - Behavioral health and primary care providers



Ex. Photos: Barriers (Competency)
"Diagnostic Competency to avoid misdiagnosis that leads to medication ineffectiveness"

Conclusions

Barriers to integrating behavioral health in primary care settings are related to clients' geographic proximity and ability to access transportation to agency, clients' personal views about mental health treatment, behavioral health competency of service providers, limited numbers of qualified behavioral health professionals, and limited flexibility in scheduling behavioral health consultations/services. These findings build upon those of Crowe and colleagues' (2017) who found a relationship between self-stigma and mental health literacy among clients. Facilitators to integrating behavioral health in primary care settings are related to easily accessible services, funding mechanisms to support behavioral health services, trained/competent behavioral health service providers and interdisciplinary team

References

- Crowe, A., Mullen, P.R., Littlewood, K., (2018). Self-Stigma, Mental Health Literacy, and Health Outcomes in Integrated Care. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, (96), 267-277.
- Wang, C. (2006). Youth participation in photovoice as a strategy for community change. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14, 1/2, 147-161.