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Integrating Medical and Behavioral Care Could Save Billions in Health Care Costs

New Report Details Benefits of Integrated Care

WASHINGTON (April 4, 2014) – A growing body of evidence on integrated medical and behavioral health care demonstrates the promise of these models for providing better care, improving patients' health, and lowering health care costs. A new report released today by the American Psychiatric Association, authored by Milliman, Inc., a global consulting and actuarial firm, outlines potential cost savings of \$26-48 billion annually in general medical care through effective integration of medical and behavioral health services.

This report, along with a report by APA's Board of Trustees' Work Group on Health Care Reform outlining key issues for leadership in the changing health care landscape, was released at an event discussing integrated care models and the implications of healthcare reform on the field of psychiatry in areas such as the financing of psychiatric care, quality and performance measurement, health information technology and workforce training.

"Mental health is too important to ignore," said Paul Summergrad, MD, President-Elect of the APA and Psychiatrist-in-Chief at Tufts Medical Center. "More than a quarter of our population has a mental disorder, many of which are comorbid with other medical conditions. From our schools to our workplace to our jails, the lack of access to quality mental health care has had far-reaching consequences."

The report found that under the current model of fragmented care, people with treated mental illnesses, including substance use disorders, have general health care costs that are two-to-three times higher than those without a mental disorder, pointing to an opportunity for potential cost savings with improved clinical care programs.

Today's event highlighted diverse perspectives of integrated medical and behavioral health models in which psychiatric physicians and other mental health professionals work closely with patients' primary care providers. Keynote remarks by Michael Hogan, PhD, former Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Health, noted the unmet needs of people with mental illness that are compounded by the current healthcare delivery model.

Panelists, including Richard Frank, PhD, Margaret T. Morris Professor of Health Economics at Harvard Medical School; Henry Chung, MD, Medical Director of Montefiore Accountable Care Organization and Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and Keris Myrick, MBA, MS, PhDc, President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, discussed the impact these models have on expanding access, leveraging limited resources and closing the gap between physical and mental health for truly comprehensive care.

Integrated care has been studied most extensively and rigorously for patients with comorbid depression, although models are now being extended to patients with other co-morbidities, including anxiety, substance use disorder, and multiple medical co-morbidities using the collaborative care model.

A recent Cochrane review of 79 randomized controlled trials, including more than 24,000 patients worldwide, compared collaborative care with routine care for depression and anxiety in primary care settings. The review found that collaborative care is more effective than routine care especially in terms of increased patient satisfaction and quality of life.

“We are on the cusp of unprecedented change in how many people in this country will get and pay for care,” said Jeffrey A. Lieberman, MD, President of the APA and Chairman of Psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. “It is our hope that these integrated care models will improve the quality and reduce the barriers to health care for those who have long faced discriminatory hurdles in getting the services they need and deserve.”

The full report and other resources are available at www.psychiatry.org/integratedcare. Join the conversation, follow @APAPsychiatric, #APAintegratedcare.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 35,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psychiatry.org.

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