

Integrating Social Work into Primary Care: Results of Current Research

S.M. Geron, Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University School of Social Work, 232 Bay State Rd. Boston, MA 02215, sgeron@bu.edu

PARTICIPANTS

S.M. Geron (Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University, Boston, MA), Social Work in Primary Care Study Utilizing Problem-Solving Therapy (PST)

B. Keefe (Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University, Boston, MA), Social Work in Primary Care Study Utilizing Problem-Solving Therapy (PST)

S. Enguidanos (Partners in Care Foundation, Pasadena, CA), Social Work in Primary Care Study Utilizing Problem-Solving Therapy (PST)

R. Golden (Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, IL), Partners in Care Study

A. Rassen (Jewish Family and Children Services, San Francisco, CA), Seniors•At•Home: A Case Management Program for Frail Elders

DISCUSSANTS

P. Volland (New York Academy of Medicine, New York, NY)

OBJECTIVES

1. To describe three interventions from large scale research projects that integrate social workers in primary care settings, including study design.
2. To present findings from the research studies on patient outcomes, utilization and cost.
3. To discuss the policy implications of integrating social workers into primary care settings to address depression and other psychosocial issues.

ABSTRACT

Common challenges faced by frail older adults living in the community (reduced physical functioning, depression, cognitive impairment, transportation, and falls) exacerbate chronic physical problems and cause unnecessary emergency room (ER) and hospital visits and premature entry into institutional settings. This symposium describes the results of three projects using social workers to integrate primary care and community care in order to improve patient outcomes for frail elders. The symposium will present overviews of the projects and interventions used, research findings, and a discussion of policy implications. The Institute of Geriatric Social Work at Boston University is currently conducting a randomized controlled trial (N=525) to test the effectiveness of a social work intervention using Problem-Solving Therapy designed to improve patient

outcomes and reduce unnecessary hospital and ER utilization. The social workers are located in the primary care offices of Kaiser Permanente in Long Beach, CA. Partners in Care (PIC), of the Council on Jewish Elderly in Chicago, placed social workers into physician practice settings to identify at-risk elderly, particularly those with cognitive impairment and/or depression, to build a more closely linked system of integrated care management through social work interventions. Using a treatment/control design, 2088 subjects were enrolled at seven treatment sites and four control sites. Seniors·At·Home, of Jewish Family and Children Services (JFCS) of San Francisco, has tested a social work case management program targeted at frail older adults that is closely linked with primary care offices. Two studies, involving random assignment of practices, have been conducted (N=3480 and 1098).

Scott Miyake Geron, Ph.D.
Director and Principal Investigator
Institute for Geriatric Social Work
Boston University School of Social Work
232 Bay State Road
Boston, MA 02215
sgeron@bu.edu

Bronwyn Keefe, MSW, MPH
Co-Director
Institute for Geriatric Social Work
Boston University School of Social Work
232 Bay State Road
Boston, MA 02215
sgeron@bu.edu

Susan Enguidanos, Ph.D., MPH
Research Director
Partners in Care Foundation
101 S. First Street, Suite 1000
Burbank, CA 91502
sengui@aol.com

Robyn Golden, LCSW
Director of Older Adult Services
Rush University Medical Center
710 S. Paulina Street
Chicago, IL 60612
Robyn_L_Golden@rush.edu

Amy Rassen, LCSW
Associate Executive Director
Jewish Family and Children Services
The Miriam Schultz Grunfeld Professional Building
2150 Post Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

amyr@jfcs.org

Patricia J. Volland
Senior Vice President
Finance & Administration
The New York Academy of Medicine
1216 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10029
pvolland@nyam.org

Social Work in Primary Care Study Utilizing Problem-Solving Treatment (PST)

S.M. Geron, Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University School of Social Work, 232 Bay State Rd. Boston, MA 02215, sgeron@bu.edu

Findings are presented from a randomized controlled trial to test a social work intervention with frail older adults in primary care designed to improve patient outcomes and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations. The intervention utilizes Problem-Solving Therapy (PST), a validated behavioral change technique shown to be effective in treating depression and other psychosocial problems. The trial, which will enroll 525 older adults, is located at Kaiser Permanente Long Beach Medical Office in California. Home-dwelling older adults with multiple chronic conditions, recent hospitalizations, and who are cognitively intact are eligible for the intervention. Enrollment for the project began in October, 2002. Nearly half (48%) live alone, 58% report having 3+ medical conditions, nearly 75% report moderate to severe pain, 53% report experiencing anxiety, and 37% have some level of depression. We will present case studies from the intervention as well as preliminary patient outcomes for depression, problem-solving skills, and quality of life.

Partners in Care (PIC): A Study of Council for Jewish Elderly, Chicago IL

R. Golden, Older Adult Services, Rush University Medical Center, 710 S. Paulina Street Chicago, IL 60612, Robyn_L_Golden@rush.edu.

This study placed social workers into physician practices to identify at-risk elderly, particularly those with cognitive impairment or depression, and to provide social work services. Overall, 2088 subjects were enrolled at seven treatment sites and four control sites. At each treatment site, social workers logged detailed service activities, issues addressed, and hours provided to the treatment group population (n=993). Findings: Patients who demonstrated substantial cognitive deterioration were more likely to have received extended social work services, and they showed improvement in global measures of health and well-being. Over 49% of patients received three or more service activities, and 13.6% received more than ten service activities. Social workers within the practices provided intervention and enhanced patient access to community based and government services. Physicians (n=26) were pleased with the value added to their

practices and six of the seven intervention sites retained the social workers after the completion of the study.

Seniors•At•Home: A Project of Jewish Family and Children Services, San Francisco CA

A. Rassen (Jewish Family and Children Services, San Francisco, CA), Seniors•At•Home: A Case Management Program for Frail Elders

Between 1995-1996, the Seniors-At-Home (SAH) participated in a randomized control trial to assess whether social work care management services in primary care could improve patient health outcomes and reduce costs. Sixteen (16) practices with a total of 3,480 older clients with histories of high medical care utilization were randomly assigned to the experimental group, 19 practices (with 2,929 older clients) to the control group. In a second study conducted, 24 primary care practices were randomized to receive either the intervention or usual care (N=1,098). Results of the first study indicated the intervention was cost-neutral versus usual care; the results from the second study were inconclusive largely due to changes in the funding environment. Other subsequent studies found significant cost savings for patients who received SAH. This session will describe the results of the studies, and describe the case management services provided.