Supporting Integrated Care within Primary Care: Embedding Behavioural Health in the Core Team

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**Background**

Primary care, and the wider NHS, is under pressure to effectively support patients with complex long-term physical health conditions (who may present with mental health co-morbidities)[1,2]. Psychological services are also struggling to meet demand, yet successfully engaging patients in attending treatment appointments is challenging[3]. Research shows supporting people to improve their health requires empathetic, collaborative interactions and improved access to behavioural/psychological interventions[4-6]. New innovative models of primary care are required in order to see changes in population health[7].

**Aim**

To develop and evaluate a behavioural health role based in general practice, embedded within integrated care

**Method**

Two Health Psychologists developed the role within two GP practices in Angus.

**Results**

In the six month period August 2017—January 2018, 247 patient were seen.

**Average wait time**

Average wait time was four days in the practice delivering fully integrated care (20% seen on the same day), compared to 14 days in the practice delivering a more traditional model.

**Patient clinical and Socio-demographics**

Patients had complex physical and mental health co-morbidities; over half were prescribed psychotropic medication (65% and 58%, in each practice, respectively). Patients were more likely from the most deprived areas (21% of patients seen were in this quartile compared to a practice population of less than 10%).

**Improvement ratings**

Almost all (95%) patients reported at least minimal improvement on the global clinical improvement (CGI) measure. Self-rated health scores improved from Fair to Good. Satisfaction with Life at baseline was 16 on average (slightly dissatisfied) and after intervention was 26 (satisfied).

**Conclusion**

Embedding behavioural health expertise within integrated care systems can offer a responsive needs-met service for complex patients, complementing the expertise that already exists within general practice and working with a range of health and social care professionals.

**2020 Vision**

Supporting patients
1. Management of long term conditions
2. Prevention of conditions through behaviour change
3. Supporting patients with stress

Supporting staff
1. Supporting the biopsychosocial model
2. Joint health & wellbeing plans
3. Preventative approach
4. Training/coaching

**References**