



Review Article

Enhancing Veteran Engagement, Demonstrating Value and Supporting Oncology Team Wellness: One Service Delivery Model of Integrating Health Psychology Services in VA Oncology Care

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary team-based oncology care, that includes health psychology services, seeks to address mental health, health behaviors and psychosocial factors including distress that contribute to disease. This service delivery model paper describes the approach taken in one VA healthcare system, outlining broad and adaptive health psychology services in oncology that include direct, Veteran-centered, co-located care, assessment of value, and healthcare team well-being. We describe why and how this approach for direct clinical care is bio-psychosocially-driven, and aims to reach a broader range of the Veteran population, including Veterans coping with co-occurring mental health. We next offer clinical information that illuminates the utility of this approach, specifically descriptive statistics and perceptions from referring clinicians and Veterans. Lastly, we describe investment in this interdisciplinary healthcare team's well-being and how this effort is foundational to the approach's success and sustainment, as well as the team's effort to continually improve cancer care services.

Keywords: Health psychology; Integrated care; Interdisciplinary team-based care; Veterans

Introduction

Interdisciplinary team-based care, incorporating psychosocial clinicians, seeks to address mental health, health behaviors and psychosocial factors including distress that contribute to disease. While this burgeoning field may be most established in chronic pain management [1], interdisciplinary collaborative care model (CoCM) in oncology is an evidence-based approach [2] with reliable data indicating enhanced quality of life and improved treatment adherence [3]. One health psychology team at Veterans Affairs (VA) offers broad and adaptive integrated services to medical teams across its healthcare system for Veterans [4,5]. With recognition from leadership and additional funding for oncology, one dedicated health psychology position has co-located and specialized further in psycho-oncology with some preliminary enhancements [6]. For example, the interdisciplinary oncology team demonstrated increased utilization of health psychology, and new availability of same-day services, engaging Veterans in behavioral health as a component of their cancer care. This paper describes a service delivery model implemented in one VA healthcare system, outlining broad and adaptive health psychology services in oncology that include Veteran-centered, co-located direct care, assessment of utility, and healthcare team well-being.

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