Behavioral Health Screening in Primary Care Practices

PROBLEM STATEMENT/BACKGROUND
Behavioral Health Integration (BHI) is an important component of the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) and necessary for whole person care. National studies estimate that in a one-year period, up to 30% of American adults suffer from one or more mental health problems.  

BHI is an opportunity to improve health outcomes and patient experience without significantly increasing healthcare costs. First step in BHI begins in primary care with screening for behavioral health conditions/issues. As primary care practices focus on BHI, we need to understand different approaches taken by practices to implement behavioral health screening in primary care within the context of different BHI models.

Aims
Objective 1: Identify process and system changes needed for implementing behavioral health screening in primary care.  
Objective 2: Develop strategies to address identified patient behavioral health needs.

Patient-Centered Medical Home Model-BHI is part and parcel of each step

Models of Integrated Care: A Continuum
Coordinated  Co-located  Fully Integrated

An Overview of Multidisciplinary Team
(includes behavioral health clinicians)

Behavioral Health Screening in MA PCMH
Tracked screening for depression, tobacco use and tobacco cessation counseling for all adult patients; and tracked depression screening for patients identified as diabetic.

Behavioral Health Screening in PCPR
- Track the behavioral health screening and results of pediatric and adolescent panel enrollees using the EMR
- Screen and utilize the EMR to track adult panel enrollees for behavioral health conditions at annual examinations using a standardized tool
- Screen and manage panel enrollees for suicide and public safety risks

An example of Standardized Behavior Health Screening Tool

MA Primary Care Reform Initiatives

Primary Care Payment Reform (PCPR)
- Single payer
- MA Medicaid’s flagship alternative payment program
- To improve access, patient experience, quality, and efficiency through care management and coordination and integration of behavioral health
- 30 participating practice organizations, approximately 50 sites
- 3-year Project: March, 2014 - March, 2017

Screening is the foundation of any level of BHI
If behavioral health needs are identified solely by PCPs who are under time pressure, about half of the people with depression are missed.1

- Screening enables a population approach to healthcare.
- Screening supports early identification and intervention and to monitor for changes in conditions.
- Screening for behavioral health introduces mental and emotional issues as a permitted area of conversation and of care.
- Screening everyone reduces stigma for those who have a positive result.

MA Patient Centered Medical Home Initiative (MA PCMH)
- Multi-payer, statewide initiative
- Sponsored by MA Health & Human Services; legislatively mandated 46 participating practices
- 3-year demonstration: March, 2011 - March, 2014
- Included payment reform and technical assistance

Sample Workflow for Depression Screening in Primary Care Practice

Before the provider enters exam room
Scrubbing the chart
Medical Assistant (MA) reviews charts and identifies patients with target chronic illness and finds their last PHQ-9, indicating patient followed by behavioral health providers.

The huddle
Care team decides which patients will receive PHQ-9 form to complete.

After the patient checks in
Front desk gives the patient a paper PHQ-9 form to complete.

Roaming the patient
MA reviews the PHQ-9 with the patient and enters it in the chart. If the score is above the threshold, MA sets up orders for referral to behavioral health provider.

Provider in exam room with patient
Provider discusses referral to behavioral health provider with patient and signs the order entered by the MA. Provider may decide to discuss a behavioral health issue based on PHQ-9 score.

After the visit
Warm hand-off to someone on the behavioral health team. Referral processed.

REFERENCES

SUMMARY
- Behavioral health screening is crucial to providing comprehensive, patient, and family-centered primary care.
- Behavioral health screening allows practices to identify patients who would benefit most from behavioral health integration resources.
- Screening should be included in practice protocols only if the practice has a protocol for diagnosis and treatment of those whose screen is positive.
- Standardized tools and new workflows are required to routinely conduct behavioral health screening in a practice.
- The EMR is an important tool for communication, coordination, and monitoring of behavioral screening and treatment progress.
- Performance metrics allow practices to monitor the process and outcomes of screening and behavioral health integration.

WORKFLOWS FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SCREENING
First steps to identify the workflows....

How are positive screens addressed?

How are the results of the screen communicated/stored/monitored?

Who is administering the tool?

What tool(s) are being used?

What is the current state of screening for behavioral health in your practice?

Behavioral Health Screening Workflow at Boston Community Health Center

At the start of the visit, patients complete a double sided screening tool that covers depression, anxiety, PTSD, and alcohol use.

Nurse reviews the completed tool and inputs the info into the EMR.

Provider incorporates information into patient interview, reviews other issues if needed refers to embedded BH clinician with warm hand-off.

Behavioral Health Screening Workflow in Primary Care Practice

SCREENING TOOLS

Behavioral Health Screening in Primary Care Practices

Baseline  
Values met the study’s definition of statistical significance p < .05.

MA PCMH Behavioral Health Screening: Change over Time

Average Rate

Baseline  
Time 11

Screened for Depression  
Tobacco Use Assessment  
Tobacco Cessation Intervention  
Depression PHQ-9 Score  
Depression Self-Management Goal  
Care Plans for Highest Risk Patients

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