Developing a Primary Care Referral Process for Assertive Community Treatment Patients:

A Quality Improvement Project

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Abstract

**Background:** Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is a care delivery model for patients with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) that has been effective for four decades in helping patients integrate into the community and helping them utilize community resources. Research has shown that patients with SMI have increased mortality and comorbid conditions, and emphasis on preventive care is recommended. Despite national ACT guidelines emphasizing the need for ACT teams to address coordination of mental health and primary care, there are no uniform recommendations in ACT for screening, treatment, monitoring, referral, or affiliation with medical care. **Methods:** This paper will describe a quality improvement project that aims to improve coordination of primary care services for ACT-enrolled patients by implementing a formal primary care referral program into an urban ACT program. The long-term goal of this project is to improve the long-term health outcomes for patients with SMI in this ACT program. **Results:** When compared to baseline, a 36% increase in patients established with a primary care provider was observed at conclusion of the project. **Conclusion:** The implementation of a formal referral process is beneficial in coordinating mental health and primary care in an ACT setting.

*Keywords*: Serious Mental Illness, Assertive Community Treatment, Primary Care