

Advancing mental health nursing practice – establishing a physical health clinic for people with mental health concerns within the primary care setting

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ABSTRACT (300 words)

Introduction/Background

Approximately 40% of people who have a mental disorder also have at least one chronic physical disorder. The high prevalence of modifiable factors such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, inactivity and poor diet within this population that puts them at risk of developing diabetes, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Without intervention these factors may lead to physical health disorders such as obesity, cardiac disease, hypertension, respiratory disease, metabolic syndrome, diabetes and cancer which reduces their life expectancy and quality of life. Screening for physical health disorders in people with mental disorders in the primary health care setting is generally poor. This presents a service gap that Nurse Practitioners with specialist mental health skills and training can fill.

Aim/Purpose of the project

The aim of this project was to establish a Nurse Practitioner (NP) led physical health clinic that provides a comprehensive 'one stop shop approach' to chronic disease management for people with an identified mental disorder living in the Cockburn region.

Methods/Process/Who is being studied

Mental health nurse academics at Curtin University and mental health Clinicians from Fiona Stanley and Fremantle Mental Health Services secured funding from WA Primary Health Alliance (research and innovation grant) to establish a NP led physical health clinic (Cockburn Wellbeing) within the primary care setting at Cockburn Integrated Health, in Success WA. This was achieved by combining a research project that utilised an exploratory cohort design with an innovative service delivery model that advances mental health nursing practice.

Results/Outcome

This paper reports on the process of establishing Cockburn Wellbeing and preliminary results of the first group of research participants.

Recommendations/Conclusion

The model of care adopted by Cockburn Wellbeing can be replicated to other areas within WA and is an example of how advanced practice in mental health nursing can address a service gap to improve health outcomes.