Career Development Awards (CDA)

Implementation Research of Benefit-Based Treatment for Cardiovascular Disease

PI: Jeremy Sussman

Background: Heart attack and stroke cause over 1/3 of all deaths in VA patients. The current guidelines for the prevention of these conditions focus on lowering patients' blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Benefit-based tailored treatment (BTT), a new treatment strategy, instead guides treatment decisions based on the likelihood that a medication would prevent a heart attack or stroke. BTT could be more efficient than current guidelines, but would be a major change in care procedure. The purpose of this CDA is to develop and assess tools that prepare for the use of this new, more efficient and patient-centered approach. This will include a decision support tool for clinicians and a novel performance measurement system to assess quality of care.

Objectives: I will seek to understand clinicians' and patients' perceptions of and receptivity to the use of BTT for cardiovascular disease. Information gained from this research will help assess and improve the effectiveness of the decision support tool and educational program for clinicians. Information gained from focus groups with patients will help define their priorities in cardiovascular disease prevention and help determine ways to make care more patient-centered. The decision support tool and educational program will be assessed in a real-world randomized pilot study. The study aims to ensure that clinicians and patients believe the tool is valuable and does not disrupt care processes. Outcomes of interest will be the influence of the intervention on clinicians' treatment decisions and patients’ satisfaction with their clinicians. Finally, I aim to develop and evaluate a novel performance measurement system based on benefit-based tailored treatment.

Impact: Developing a patient-centered treatment strategy that could prevent more cardiovascular disease using less overall medication could result in more positive outcomes for a very significant number of patients.

VA Healthcare Delivery for OEF/OIF Veterans with Mental & Substance Use Disorders

PI: Kipling Bohnert

Background: Studies indicate that rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among US Service Members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are high, yet use of mental health treatment among these individuals is low. Therefore, it is likely that many Veterans of these conflicts receiving their healthcare through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) have an urgent need for PTSD mental health services.

Objectives: The purpose of this project is to provide critical and timely evidence to fill in the existing gaps regarding treatment initiation and engagement among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans with PTSD in VHA. The specific aims of the research are: (1) to identify patient and provider factors associated with timely treatment initiation and continued engagement among all OEF/OIF/OND Veterans in VHA care who receive positive PTSD screens; (2) to further elucidate patient factors associated with timely initiation and continued engagement in PTSD treatment using a qualitative approach with provider and Veteran patient focus groups; (3) to build on the two prior aims by developing and piloting a theory-based intervention to increase initiation and engagement in PTSD treatment among Veterans with PTSD; and (4) to identify important facility factors and variation associated with timely treatment initiation and engagement in order to inform future implementation efforts.

Impact: Learning what factors play a role in the gap between a positive screen, treatment initiation and continuation can significantly improve our ability to reduce Veteran suffering and prevent further functional and emotional problems.