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VA continues to pioneer new approaches for treating Veteran mental health conditions

New study demonstrates effectiveness of implementing collaborative team method

WASHINGTON — A recent [study](#) by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open](#) on March 1, showed positive outcomes for Veterans struggling with multiple mental health conditions.

The randomized implementation trial, which included 5,596 Veterans receiving care in a VA outpatient mental health clinic, showed that effective teamwork and a patient's active involvement in their care can reduce hospitalization rates for Veterans with mental health conditions.

"VA is committed to ensuring Veterans receive the best mental health care available," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said. "Combining best practices, such as those identified in the study allows VA to continually refine our mental health services."

The [study](#) outlines effective steps for Veterans, their clinicians and the larger VA health care system to all work together to positively impact the mental health of Veterans. The new collaborative, interdisciplinary team approach to outpatient mental health, demonstrated:

Reduced rate of mental health hospitalizations among Veterans treated by the teams.

- Improved mental health status for Veterans with multiple mental health conditions.
- Improved clinician team function in terms of clarity of team member roles and prioritization of team over individual goals.

During the study, researchers worked with existing [VA Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program \(BHIP\)](#) teams in mental health outpatient clinics. BHIP teams generally comprise psychiatrists, psychologists, RN care managers, advanced practice nurses, peer support specialists, social workers and licensed therapists.

Researchers helped these teams to align their care processes with the scientifically proven (i.e., evidence-based) Collaborative Chronic Care Model (CCM), which is an approach for integrating behavioral health care and engaging Veterans to be active participants in their care. This study extended the CCM, which had been scientifically proven to improve outcomes in formal clinical research trials, to VA outpatient clinics.

As a result of the findings collected during the trial and based off Veteran health status and satisfaction data gathered during telephone interviews at baseline and at six and 12 months of support, VA plans to nationally implement the unique team-based model of care over the next two years to benefit more Veterans and those who care for them.

To learn more, read the full [report](#).

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