

The Behavioral Health Outreach Program at the USD Coyote Clinic

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Introduction

The Sioux Falls Metro Area has a population of more than 250,000. In 2015, 8.7 percent of this population was uninsured² – up from 7.8 percent in 2014. The Avera Downtown Clinic is a main provider for uninsured and low-income patients in Sioux Falls, SD. The clinic has one psychiatrist who sees patients one morning per week, creating a 3-4 month wait for new patients seeking psychiatric care. Other options for low-cost psychiatric care include Sioux Falls Community Health and Southeastern Behavioral Health Care. The former was discontinued due to a shortage of staff and the latter requires a fee and work with case management.

The University of South Dakota Coyote Clinic is a student-run free clinic that operates at the Avera Downtown Clinic every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 5pm-9pm. The clinic provides acute care services, basic laboratory testing, flu shots, and prescription assistance to uninsured patients over the age of 18.

The purpose of the Behavioral Health Outreach Program at the USD Coyote Clinic is to expand the services of the Coyote Clinic to include free psychiatric care for uninsured adults over the age of 18. This will include implementing mental health screening tools through the use of questionnaires, utilizing organizations in the community who offer mental health services, improving patient education on the importance of maintaining mental health by creating educational handouts, and increasing medical student exposure to mental health care.



Methods

To accomplish this, the clinic began working with psychiatry residents from Avera Behavioral Health who serve as volunteers every 2nd Tuesday of the month. On these clinic nights, medical students perform the initial workup and documentation for the psychiatric appointment. Following the patient interview, the medical students debrief with a psychiatry resident. The students and resident then meet with the patient together to discuss any medication changes, the overall plan of care, and conclude the appointment. Residents debrief all patient encounters with the primary care physician on staff for final approval.

PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires began being distributed to all patients at Coyote Clinic, regardless of chief complaint.

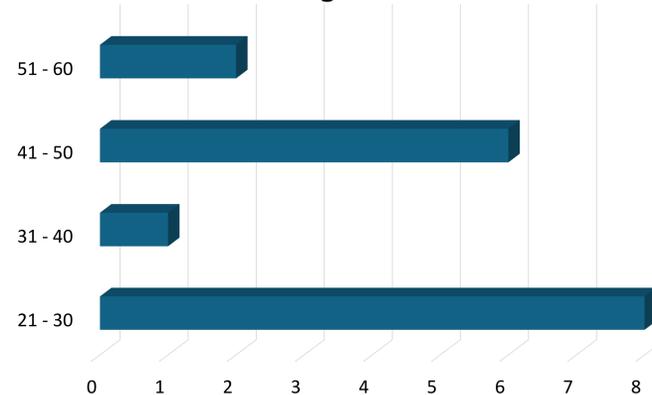
Results

This program facilitated 1-2 new psychiatric evaluations every month. Patients were scheduled for follow-up appointments at the clinic on the 4th Tuesday of a succeeding month as appropriate. From January to September 2018, the program provided services to 17 new psychiatric patients. Their diagnoses, age, gender, and ethnicity are as follows in the graphs below. The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires were distributed to over 50 patients in 3 months.

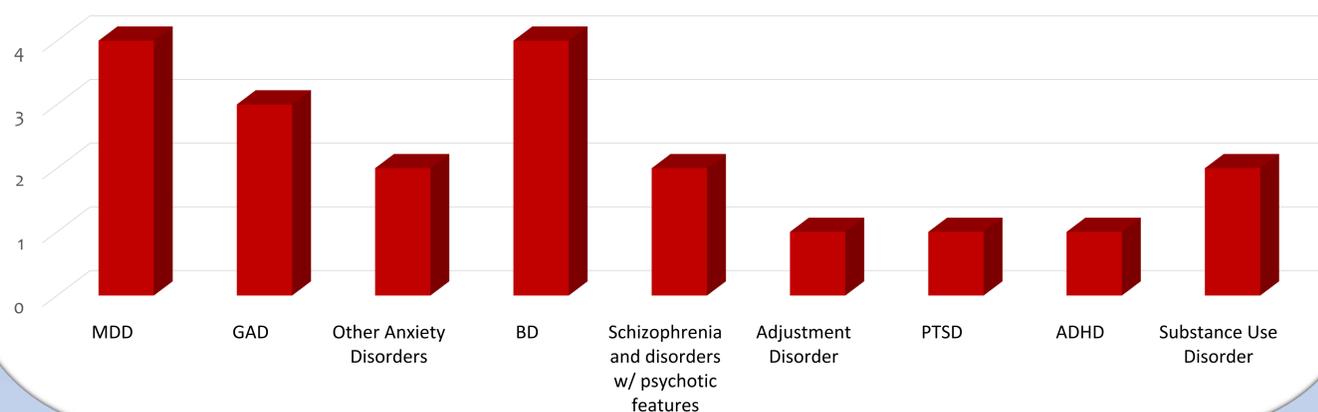
These interactions gave medical students additional opportunities to develop clinical skills working with psychiatric patients.

We revised our collection of resources and created a binder with handouts that can be given to patients depending on their particular needs. We have also been providing referrals for patients to be seen at Southeastern Behavioral Health. Additionally, we are working to implement a social work student into the clinic to better connect our patients to community resources.

Patient Age Distribution



Diagnoses January to September 2018



Conclusion

The Behavioral Health Outreach Program at the University of South Dakota Coyote Clinic established a new avenue for access to low-cost mental health care in the Sioux Falls community and provided USD medical students with supplemental mental health experience.

Additionally, the program paved the way for further organization of community resources and the implementation of mental health questionnaires and informational handouts.

Future goals include integration of social work and nursing students into the clinic, mental health nights for patients to benefit from hearing one another's experiences, and the creation of a fundraising program to sustain the organization.

Acknowledgements

¹ The USD Sanford School of Medicine

² SouthDakotaDashboard.org

³ The Helping Hands Grant Program