Increasing Access to Comprehensive Care for People with Severe Mental Illness

Kathy Jackson D.O.

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Abstract

This brief will address the need for primary health care delivery improvement for one of the nation’s most vulnerable populations: those who are severe and persistently mentally ill (SPMI). Statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health reports the number one reason for disability between the ages of 15 to 44 is mental illness. The severe and persistently mentally ill make up six percent of this population; one in seventeen of the mentally ill are found to have severe and persistent mental illness.

There is a disparity in medical care for this minority population. The disparity chasm has not closed in the last twenty years, in fact it has increased. The SPMI in our country die twenty five younger than the average citizen. The deaths are not attributed to mental health issues, but common health problems seen in any primary care office every day; such as elevated blood pressure, uncontrolled diabetes, high cholesterol, and thyroid problems.

Conducting the work of primary care and behavioral integration is an imperative for raising the level of health care for all populations in America, but especially the SPMD. Integration of primary care and behavioral health through the Specialized Medical Home will focus on creating and sustaining health and wellness for the severely and persistently mentally ill.