Dominican University of California

From the SelectedWorks of Ruth Ramsey

April, 2014

Mental Health OT and Primary Care or Primary Prevention

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/ruth_ramsey/59/
Mental Health OT and Primary Care or Primary Prevention

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A bit about me...

- Clinical practice in mental health x10 years
- OT educator x 18 years
- Research on fall prevention, healthy aging, older driver safety: all have significant psychosocial components
- Current areas of interest: health care reform, aging and mental health, program development/system redesign, wellness and health promotion, mindfulness and mental health
Current healthcare reform trends

- Physical and behavioral health integration
- Medical homes and accountable care organizations
- Emphasis on “population health”
- Focus on “mental health for all”, not just SMI
Recent Projects (with students)

- Decreasing fall risk for older adults with SMI living in the community (2012)
  - Examine impact of DX, meds, aging, cognition on fall risk
  - Modify environment to reduce fall risk
  - Educate staff on fall risk assessment and prevention
  - Provide educational and exercise materials for residents

- Partnering with first responders to reduce falls
  - Examine relationship between falls, SA, and depression
  - Educate first responders on psychosocial, cognitive issues of older adults, especially those who fall
  - Offer fall prevention education and fall risk assessments
Other projects in development

- Placement of OT interns at county jail
  - Life skills, transition planning, exercise, mindfulness
  - Demonstrate value of OT in that setting

- Partnership with County Mental Health and local service provider
  - Program development and implementation
  - Peer mentor training for people with SMI

- Role of OT in ACO’s, primary care settings
  - OT’s as health navigators, wellness coaches
  - Chronic disease management
  - Other possibilities
Statewide Project re: OT in MH

- Meetings with state health care officials, president of OTAC, other task force members
- Request that OT’s be included as primary mental health professionals in regulatory language for public mental health system in CA
- Effort to dialogue re: workforce issues in MH and the possibility that OT’s could help
- OT’s may be included in scholarships for MH professionals
- There seems to be some receptivity
Health Care Reform: Opportunities

- Physical and behavioral health integration
- Chronic disease management, wellness
- Increased numbers of people aging with a mental illness in the community
- Increased need for experts on aging and mental health
- Role of meaningful occupation in preserving, improving mental health
- Increased need for community programs
Challenges

- Regulatory: OT not included as one of 10 essential services under ACA
- OT’s also not seen as primary mental health providers in most states
- Shortage of qualified OT’s with mental health expertise, needed skills
- Decreased emphasis on mental health practice in OT education, ACOTE Standards
- Competition from other professions
What can you do?

- Education and information re: healthcare reform
- Look for opportunities to partner with local primary care providers, community clinics, others (FR)
- Skill development
  - Chronic disease management
  - Fall risk assessment (mandated for ACO’s)
  - Cognitive-behavioral interventions
  - Mindfulness (evidence-based)
  - Community program development
  - Consultation and training