

## **Improving Mental Health Services for Older Adults**

**Principal Investigator:** Jürgen Unützer, MD, MPH, Department of Psychiatry;

**Program Manager:** Diane Powers, MA

We have a program of geriatric mental health services research that works with health care organizations around the country to develop, test, implement, and disseminate evidence-based models of care for common problems such as depression and pain in older adults. At the heart of this research program is Project IMPACT which is a collaborative care model for the treatment of late-life depression. The model was tested in a randomized control trial in 18 primary care clinics within 8 diverse healthcare organizations, including HMOs, fee-for-service clinics, a VA clinic and a public hospital clinic. The trial showed that patients receiving IMPACT care were twice as likely as patients receiving usual care to have a significant reduction in depressive symptoms. Intervention patients also had significantly better quality of life and experienced an improvement in physical functioning over time as compared with usual care patients whose physical functioning declined over time. Based on the strength of these and other findings from the trial, Dr. Unützer received funding to disseminate the IMPACT model to healthcare organizations around the country. Several large healthcare organizations have adapted and implemented the IMPACT model with positive results as demonstrated by program evaluations completed to date. In addition to Project IMPACT, Dr. Unützer's work includes an adaptation of the IMPACT model to include care management for both depression and chronic arthritis pain. We are also participating in a research project that aims to add depression to the care management services offered by eight of the largest disease management companies in the country participating in CMS's Medicare Health Support program. Dr. Unützer also directs the University of Washington's participation a three site consortium (with Cornell and Dartmouth) NRSA Postdoctoral Training Program in Geriatric Mental Health Services Research.