TEAMcare improves depression, diabetes, and heart disease outcomes by treating ‘whole patient’ with ‘whole team’

UW, Group Health collaborative care model launches new online course for health care providers

A new online course for health care providers available through the UW Center for Commercialization (C4C) Training Xchange program is bringing together professionals from multiple disciplines to learn a new collaborative approach to treating patients with multiple chronic illnesses – both physical and mental.

Known as TEAMcare, this comprehensive care model puts the patient in the driver’s seat by teaching them the self-care skills they need to optimally control their chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease and depression.

It’s a team-based approach involving nurses, psychiatrists, primary care physicians and other medical providers that’s delivered in the patient's primary care clinic and by telephone. Working together, doctors start and adjust medications sooner and more often to reach goals -- “treating to target” – and nurses work with patients and health teams to manage care for depression and physical diseases together.

“You could say it’s about treating ‘the whole patient’ with ‘the whole team,’” explained Paul Ciechanowski, UW associate professor of psychiatry and director of the UW Center for Commercialization (C4C) Training Xchange program, where he helps to bridge the gap between researchers and frontline users who provide services.

The new online training course is aimed at implementing the TEAMcare approach far and wide -- in as many health care organizations as possible nationwide. Currently, more than 30 sites across North America are now using TEAMcare as a key program for
developing a patient-centered medical home model or accountable care organization. Overall costs of health care for patients treated with TEAMcare have been shown to be $600 to $1100 lower per patient over a two-year period, according to a cost-effectiveness study published in 2013 in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

“TEAMcare provides a model of care that has proven very efficient and effective in treating people with three or more chronic illnesses -- that is, depression, heart disease and diabetes,” said Dr. Wayne Katon, a UW professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences known for his research on the impact of depression and anxiety on patients with chronic medical illness. “TEAMcare has not only improved depression outcomes, it has improved blood sugar control, blood pressure control and LDL cholesterol levels -- and it has saved costs.”

One of the most challenging and costly patient groups to care for is the growing number of people with multiple chronic illnesses, Katon said. Patients with diabetes and heart disease often suffer from depression, which can make them feel helpless about managing their chronic disease. And that, in turn, can lead to more complications and even deaths.

Accredited by the UW School of Medicine’s Continuing Medical Education program, TEAMcare is one of seven training programs currently available at C4C’s Training Xchange, where practicing professionals -- researchers, clinicians, and entrepreneurs -- exchange expertise and learn new evidence-based programs through a range of training options.

“Training Xchange helps researchers share their interventions, programs or tools, which increases the visibility of their research findings,” Ciechanowski said. “We focus on practical skill development and program implementation in ready-to-use formats that lead to real change.”

That collaborative work recently led to a success story at The Polyclinic, a Seattle-based multispecialty physician group. Using the TEAMcare program to treat patients with diabetes and major depression, The Polyclinic was able to successfully treat depression and achieve all three targets of blood glucose, blood pressure, and LDL cholesterol levels in 69 percent of patients who completed the program over four months. As a comparative benchmark, in many of the highest performing healthcare organizations
nationwide, the proportion of patients with diabetes able to achieve those same desired levels outside of the TEAMcare approach is closer to 40%, Katon said.

To learn more about TEAMcare and how it is improving quality of care – and quality of life – for patients, visit www.teamcarehealth.org and check out the new TEAMcare online course for health care providers. Check out the video.

About the University of Washington Center for Commercialization (C4C)

As one of the leading recipients of federal funding for research, UW is producing innovations that have the power to change the world—from biofuel alternatives, to more effective treatments for Alzheimer’s disease and brain cancer, to purification technology for drinking water in the developing world. The UW Center for Commercialization (C4C) is dedicated to helping UW researchers achieve the greatest impact from their innovations. Over the past four years UW C4C has implemented new programs and integrated its resources to provide one of the best university commercialization centers for UW researchers.

About Training Xchange

Training Xchange, a program of the UW Center for Commercialization, is a meeting place that brings together professionals -- from developers of programs or interventions to front-line users -- to share information. Training Xchange works with professionals from multiple disciplines, such as healthcare, education and mental health, who are dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives. Through innovative collaborative strategies and cutting-edge technologies, Training Xchange disseminates research-proven information, enhances ongoing learning, and improves acquisition of skills through hands-on learning processes.

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