(A) County Perspective on Access to Mental Health Services for Individuals with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders
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December 20, 2017
Disclaimer

- Thoughts shared today are my own, and do not necessarily represent those of Placer County, CBHDA, CSAC, etc.
Reflections on the Dementias (NCDs)

- They ARE psychiatric disorders
- With enough time, they almost always WILL advance to cause serious dysfunction.
- Most psychiatrists (and many other mental health professionals) are trained to diagnose and treat them.
- They generally DO respond to psychiatric treatments.
  - Medications
  - Psychotherapy
  - Rehabilitation
  - Psychosocial support
  - Case management
Dementia and “specialty mental health” settings

• Patients with dementias often do better when treated in a “specialty mental health” setting
  • Some modifications (usually minor) to these settings may be needed
  • Usually more concerns from SMH clients and staff than those with dementia diagnoses and their families
Dementias look like and co-occur with other psychiatric disorders

- High prevalence of serious psychiatric symptoms and impairment from dementias
- Very high co-occurrence with other psychiatric disorders
- Still, people with dementias very rarely get treated in specialty mental health settings
- Seems especially true for Medicaid beneficiaries in California
Why?

• History
• Policy
• Training
• Culture
• Stigma
• Not measuring!
• Resources
Proposed Solutions

• Start requiring reporting of number of claims and/or prevalence of co-occurring dementia diagnoses (for both Counties and managed care plans)

• New funding for mental health providers/plans to treat dementias (and maybe also TBI, ID/DD?)
  • Bundled payments?
  • Shared savings?
  • “Collective impact” model

• Additional education/training
  • Mental health providers
  • Medical providers
  • Community groups/advocates
  • Clients/families
Hope for the Future

• Dementia treatment advances in the next 1-2 decades have the potential to:
  • Better alleviate symptoms
  • Slow/ prevent progression
  • Perhaps even reverse degeneration
• In addition, extensive effort underway to improve physical health of people experiencing other serious mental illnesses
• Both of these trends are likely to converge to make dementias much more often and much more successfully treated in specialty mental health settings
• Will probably need a push...
Questions/Comments?

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