PTSD Treatment May Be More Cost Effective When Patients Get to Choose

A cost analysis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatments published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* showed that letting patients choose their course of treatment (i.e., either psychotherapy or medication) is less expensive than assigning a treatment and provides a higher quality of life for patients.

Researchers used a study design called a doubly randomized preference trial to investigate whether giving patients a choice of therapies affects their treatment outcomes.

The 200 participants—all diagnosed with PTSD and aged 18 to 65—were assigned to either a group that was allowed to select their own treatment or a group that had their treatment chosen for them. Participants were then given 10 weeks of treatment with either the antidepressant drug sertraline (Zoloft®, Lustral®) or counseling called prolonged exposure therapy.

When study participants were given a choice, the average treatment cost per year was $6,156, compared with $7,778 for those assigned a treatment—a difference of approximately $1,622 per patient per year.

Among the patients not given a choice of treatment, counseling with prolonged exposure therapy cost, on average, slightly less than pharmacotherapy with sertraline—$7,030 versus $8,650 per patient per year, respectively.

Costs for PTSD treatment in 2012 included therapy, outpatient services, hospitalization, emergency department visits, pharmacy services, and nonmedical services, as well as indirect costs, such as losses in worker productivity.


Independent Living Centers Provide Community-Based Programs, Empower Individuals with Mental Illness

Individuals with mental illness who are in crisis often find themselves in mental health facilities, living on the streets, or incarcerated in jails or prisons. However, California’s Independent Living Centers (ILCs) provide an alternative to hospitalization and incarceration through community-based programs and support services that promote independence and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

One such ILC, the Westside Center for Independent Living (WCIL), focuses on the individual, not the mental health illness, and offers services designed to empower individuals, allowing them to take charge of their lives. WCIL identified the following four critical gaps in mental health services in West Los Angeles: (a) the lack of prevention and early intervention for young children before entering school; (b) the lack of quality and affordable housing; (c) the failure to address the needs of homeless individuals, including many young Veterans; and (d) the gap referred to as the lost population, or individuals who do not seek treatment for reasons such as the stigma associated with mental illness, cultural and language barriers, or not having access to services where they live.

To close the gaps, WCIL works closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and collaborates with local mental health partners to provide peer-to-peer counseling, as well as a variety of essential community-based services and programs.

One way WCIL empowers individuals living with mental illness is by training them to become peer advocates through the Mental Health Peer Support Program. The 8-week course, which covers crisis intervention, setting boundaries between counselor and consumer, case management, community resources, advocacy, housing issues, and more, is followed by a 10-week internship in a mental health agency in WCIL’s service area. These internships often result in the advocate trainees finding permanent employment.

In addition to housing and training, WCIL conducts mental health support groups focused on wellness and healthy living, art therapy, creative writing, gardening, women’s issues, current events, and other areas of interest.


Researchers Uncover New Insight Into Rapid-Acting Antidepressant Drug for Treatment-Resistant Depression

Researchers have found that by blocking N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptors with the drug ketamine, they could elicit rapid antidepressant effects in patients with treatment-resistant depression. Ketamine was developed as an anesthetic but is better known publicly for its abuse as the party drug “Special K.”

However, because of ketamine’s side effects (i.e., hallucinations and the potential for abuse) that limit
its utility as an antidepressant agent, researchers began investigating a
drug called memantine, currently
U.S. Food and Drug Administration–
approved for treating moderate
to severe Alzheimer’s disease, as a
potentially promising therapy for
treatment-resistant depression.

According to researchers, me-
mantine acts on the same receptors
in the brain as fast-acting ketamine;
however, recent clinical data suggest
that memantine does not exert rapid
antidepressant action for reasons that
are poorly understood. The different
effects of ketamine and memantine
alter signals emanating from NMDA
receptors, in particular those that de-
termine antidepressant efficacy.

Source. “Researchers Uncover New Insights Into
Developing Rapid-Acting Antidepressant for Treatment-
Resistant Depression.” (2014, June 12). Retrieved July 16,
doi:10.3928/02793695-20140826-01

Physical Work Environment in Hospitals May Affect Nurses’
Job Satisfaction

A new study published in Research in Nursing & Health has found that a physical
work environment that facilitates RNs’ efficiency, teamwork, and interprofessional
communication is related to higher job satisfaction.

The study is based on a 98-question survey of 1,141 RNs, which is part of RN Work
Project, a nationwide, 10-year, longitudinal survey of RNs that began in 2006.

Researchers found that although
physical environment had no direct in-
fluence on job satisfaction, it did have
a significant indirect influence because
the environment affected whether
nurses could complete tasks without
interruptions, communicate easily with
other nurses and physicians, and/or do
their jobs efficiently.

In addition, they found that RNs who
gave their physical work environments higher ratings were also more likely to report
better workgroup cohesion, nurse–physician relations, workload, and other factors as-
associated with job satisfaction.

Researchers measured job satisfaction in terms of procedural justice, autonomy,
nurse–physician relationships, distributive justice, opportunities for promotion,
workgroup cohesion, and variety in one’s job.

Physical environment was assessed based on the architectural, ambient, and
design features of the workspace, including crowdedness, ventilation, lighting,
arrangement of furniture, colors and decorations, aesthetic appearance, and the
need for remodeling.


© 2014 Shutterstock.com/auremar