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Conference Abstract

Meeting the physical health needs of people living with mental illness: Current practices within NSW community managed organisations and where to from here

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Abstract

There is irrefutable evidence that people living with mental illness are much more likely than the general population to experience a number of serious and life threatening physical health conditions. People with mental illness have a life expectancy that is approximately 25 years less than that of the general population. Incidence of diabetes in persons with persistent mental illness is four times that of the general population; of cardiovascular disease three times that of the general population and weight gain on commonly prescribed medication is around 40%. Importantly, the literature also demonstrates that people living with mental illness receive less access to and poorer quality of health care for those physical conditions than the general population (De Hert, M. et al. 2011).

This presentation will describe the findings and recommendations stemming from a 6 month project conducted by the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) in partnership with the University of Sydney, funded by the Ministry of Health. In the study, we explored: a) the extent or range of physical health related activities currently offered by NSW mental health CMOs; b) if and/or how the effectiveness of these current activities were being measured; c) perspectives of various stakeholders on the strengths/benefits and weaknesses/challenges of current practices; and d) how well reported practices aligned with best emerging and available evidence. The study incorporated the knowledge, insights and perspectives of CMO managers, on-the-ground staff, consumers or service-users and carers.

Results of the study highlight innovative one-off physical health programs and practices currently being delivered by NSW CMO's that are in line with best reported practices internationally. The study also resulted in seven recommendations and associated actions. These include: detailed outlines of on-going education and training needs; the need for more systematic, sustainable practices; enhanced methods of measuring effectiveness; better sharing of knowledge and

experience across the sector; and finally, the forging of stronger partnerships and collaborations with other health sectors.

Keywords

sector integration; mental health; physical health; community; evaluation

References

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PowerPoint presentation

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