



Implementation of Integrated Stepped Care for Unhealthy Alcohol Use In HIV Clinics

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What is the research about?

Unhealthy alcohol use is associated with worse outcomes among people who live with HIV because it affects HIV treatment and other health conditions. Medications and counseling that treat unhealthy alcohol use are often not provided where patients receive care for HIV, and not all patients want or require the most intensive services. This study sought to understand factors impacting implementation of an integrated stepped care model for treating unhealthy alcohol use in HIV clinics from the perspectives of providers, including social workers, psychologists and addiction psychiatrists.

Why is this important for HIV prevention and treatment?

Given the association between unhealthy alcohol use and sexual risk behaviors and how people take their medications, strategies to decrease unhealthy alcohol use among people with HIV are essential in promoting HIV prevention and treatment.

What did the researchers do?

We conducted two focus groups with social workers (n=4), psychologists (n=2) and addiction psychiatrists (n=4) involved in an ongoing randomized controlled trial evaluating integrated stepped care for unhealthy alcohol use in people living with HIV receiving treatment at five Veterans Affairs (VA)-based HIV clinics. We use a framework designed to evaluate how best to implement proven treatments, called the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), to guide the data collection and analysis.

What did the researchers find?

We found that the major factors impacting providers' implementation were:

- *Intervention characteristics:* Providers valued tools and processes for facilitating patient motivation for treatment to decrease unhealthy alcohol use and also expressed a desire for flexibility to address other substances and control the number of treatment sessions.
- *Inner setting:* Providers felt that treating unhealthy alcohol use

in VA-based HIV clinics was consistent with the priorities of the VA in general.

- *Characteristics of individuals:* Providers described a high level of self-efficacy to provide care consistent with the integrated stepped care model but expressed a desire for more consistent use of this model to maintain their skills and suggested that other providers (i.e. HIV providers) might be involved.

How can you use this research?

If the randomized controlled trial finds that integrated stepped care is effective at decreasing unhealthy alcohol use and/or improving HIV outcomes, results from this study can help guide efforts to implement this model in other VA and non-VA-based HIV treatment settings.

Original Research Article:

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