

PTSD Screening Test Characteristics Within Primary Care Settings

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Introduction

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health problems are not well addressed within the U.S. healthcare system. PTSD is a frequent problem in primary care settings. Low case identification rates are problematic given that PTSD is associated with important outcomes (i.e., health risk behaviors, physical health, mental health, and health care utilization). The importance of PTSD case identification demands screening tests optimal for use in primary care settings.

Methods

Three PTSD screening tests appropriate for possible use within busy outpatient primary care clinics were identified. These tests have mostly been validated on non-primary care samples. This study proposed to validate these three tests for use in outpatient primary care clinics. With a proposed sample of 750 adult patients, scores on these three screening tests will be contrasted to scores on a “gold standard” PTSD structured interview. Relevant test characteristics will be calculated.

Results

The authors submitted a grant proposal to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at MUSC. The initial grant review was favorable, but required resubmission. The grant for the proposed study has been revised twice and we are currently awaiting results of the third review cycle. Based on feedback to date, we are hopeful that this study will be funded beginning July 1, 2005. We expect data collection to take about one year. The presentation will review steps in research grant development.

Conclusions

PTSD occurs frequently in primary care settings and has important correlates that primary care physicians care about (i.e., health risk behaviors, physical health, mental health, and health care utilization). Brief, reliable, and sensitive PTSD screening tests are needed for outpatient primary care settings. This presentation will: discuss characteristics of effective screening tests, the process of seeking and obtaining research grant funding, and future research plans that will be built from results of the current study.