Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Navigating Mental Health Treatment for Black Youth

Statement of Problem

Recent research has shown significant increases in suicide deaths among Black youth and suicide attempts among Black high school students. However, Black youth are less likely to be referred to mental health treatment even when they are at risk for suicidal behaviors.

Barriers to receiving mental health services include mental health stigma, perception of treatment effectiveness, lack of cultural competence of providers and insurance limitations—to name a few. Importantly, there is a shortage of suicide prevention interventions tested for Black youth and families.

Description

The standard Suicidal Teens Accessing Treatment (STAT-ED) is a patient navigation intervention conducted in pediatric emergency departments to assist families to start mental health treatment when youth present with suicidal ideation and behaviors. However, its outcome study demonstrated that it was not effective in improving mental health initiation among youth of color.

With collaboration between Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania, this project looks to determine if systematically adapting standard STAT-ED for Black youth presenting in the emergency department who have suicidal risk and their caregivers will improve mental health treatment initiation and engagement.

This cultural adaptation includes qualitative interviews with youth and caregivers, field testing of the intervention, and input from experts and an advisory board of youth, caregivers and clinicians.

We will also test the adapted STAT-ED in a randomized controlled trial where the adapted STAT-ED will be compared to enhanced patient navigation similar to what is already provided in the ED. Those chosen for the adapted STAT-ED will be assigned a patient navigator to provide culturally informed motivational interviews, assistance with appointments, barrier deduction discussions and mental health information.

We aim to enroll 50 youth and/or caregiver pairs for participation in the trial.

The main outcomes of the trial are whether youth initiated mental health treatment and how many visits they attended. We are also interested in assessing whether youth suicidal ideation decreased. We will examine outcomes at two months and six months after the baseline assessment.

The secondary aim is to examine implementation outcomes and understand the acceptability and feasibility of adapted STAT-ED for Black youth and caregivers among youth, caregivers and the patient navigator.

Next Steps

We hope the results of this project can contribute important new knowledge on barriers faced by Black youth and their caregivers while initiating mental health treatment and examine if a culturally informed intervention will increase mental health treatment initiation. We see this as one strategy to address the growing mental health disparities for Black youth.

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