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Expanding access to education opportunities for pediatricians seeing children with mental health disorders

Only about 25% of children with mental illness are seen by a child psychiatrist. Pediatricians are often the first line of care for the majority of children with mental and behavioral health issues. However, few primary care providers report confidence in their ability to successfully manage mental illness. Additional educational support is needed to help primary care providers in treating children with the mental health issues. Our group administered survey in 2014 to pediatricians to identify if there is interest in additional education opportunities that can fit the busy pediatrician's schedule. Primary care providers were administered the investigator-designed online survey that was hosted by the secure web application REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture). Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Of the Total N=83 providers sent a survey, n=28 (33%) responded. The topic the majority primary providers wanted to address in lectures was case management and medication treatment. Most providers reported having difficulties in coordinating services and expressed interest in lectures. We attempted to address this topic in the live lectures at the clinical site. However, after implementation of the initial round of live short lectures on selected topics at the clinical site, it became apparent that busy pediatrician's schedule was resulting in low lecture attendance. Penn State Hershey Division of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry decided to develop education web series, addressing symptoms, diagnosis of the most common mental health disorder, including the warning signs for self-harm. Our group has experience with this type of educational activity on the smaller scale. We have participated as the speakers in a Webinar on the mental health topic targeting school nurses across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that was the part of the Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center and the Highmark Foundation webinars. It was well received. The first challenges were to identify: the level of interest, topics, and possible modes of delivery for this supplemental professional development. The new "needs analysis" survey was conducted in 2017. This time survey was sent to pediatricians who worked at our pilot site and 60.53% responded. Participation was anonymous and voluntary and the responses demonstrated a significant level of interest in the idea for lecture type mode of delivery. This time, 87% responded that they are interested in the lecture delivered online as a webcast training, with a majority expressing a wish for online lectures to be no longer than 30 minutes, which should target specific topics and case studies, and which they could access at their own time and as needed. The Division of the Child and adolescent Psychiatry at our institution made a decision to design record and offer Open Educational Resources in a format of web series, addressing symptoms diagnosis of the most common mental health disorder, Depression, Anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Behavior Problems, School Psychiatry and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Speaker with expertise in each area agreed to record lectures. Initial lecture on the topic of Depression and Suicide prevention is available as no-cost, pre-recorded Webcast psycho educational opportunity for pediatricians at our institution on the website dedicated to pediatricians and also child advocate website available to the public. Within few weeks public link had over 500 visits and we will continue to monitor the interest. This education opportunity might also benefit providers and families who live in areas with a shortage of behavioral health specialists by providing no cost short lecture series through school or other organization.

Biography

Lidija Petrovic-Dovat is a Director of the Child and Adolescent Anxiety Disorder Program at the Penn State Hershey College of medicine. She is the Associate Director of Pediatric Behavioral Health Collaborative Care Program and the Associate Site Director for Child Services. Dr. Petrovic's clinical and research interests include anxiety disorders and depression. She actively collaborates with the Department of Pediatrics at the clinical and research level and is involved in the clinical care, as well as resident and medical student's education.

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