

**Title of Presentation:** “Decreasing Health Care Costs with Family Therapy”

**Principal Presenter:** D. Russell Crane, Ph.D.  
Title: Professor of Marital & Family Therapy  
Organization: Brigham Young University  
Address: 257 Taylor Building, Provo, UT 84602

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this presentation to present an “executive summary” of the effectiveness research that addresses issues of cost effectiveness in including family therapy in mental health services.

Effectiveness research is concerned with “real services to real people by real practitioners”. In other word, the effects mental health services conducted ‘in the field,’ under the “normal” conditions in which most therapies are provided.

**Methods:**

The presentation will highlight studies that have used data from the following sources:

1. A large western Health Maintenance Organization with over 110,000 subscribers. Data was collected from almost 300 persons who received individual, couples and family therapy in a “staff model” HMO. Health care records for individuals were collected for six months before, during and after therapy. Results suggest that:
  - a. Marital and Family Therapy (MFT) treatments can reduce health care use by 20%.
  - b. MFT treatments decrease the health care use of family members other than the identified patient by 30%.
  - c. MFT treatments decrease the use of health care by “high users” of health care services, by 50%
  
2. State of Kansas Medicaid system. Over 4,000 multi-ethnic youth diagnosed as “conduct disordered” were identified and tracked over a 30 month period. The costs of all health care (including mental health care) were available for analysis. Results suggest that:
  - a. Including family therapy in the treatment of these youth does not increase total health care costs. In fact, youth who received family therapy were significantly less expensive to care for than were those who did not.
  - b. Interestingly, those who received “on-home” family therapy were least expensive of all.

3. A large national health insurance company  
Psychotherapy costs data were available for over 50,000 subscribers of a large health insurance company. The costs of treating depression were compared for those who receive psychotherapy for depression.  
Preliminary results suggest:
  - a. Individuals who received family or couples' treatment for depression were significantly less expensive to treat than those who received individual therapy alone.