



Rapid Science to Service: First Episode of Psychosis Programs Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Early Intervention for Psychosis in Rural County Systems

Adriana Furuzawa, Director of the PREP Division of the Felton Institute, provided an overview of the PREP program, its expansion in California, and some of their future plans. In particular, Ms. Furuzawa focused on implementing first episode psychosis treatment in rural areas. PREP stands for Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis. (Note, however, that this name will be changing soon.)

PREP started in San Francisco in 2007, expanding into Oakland and surrounding towns in 2010. In 2012 and 2013, PREP expanded into San Mateo County, which includes a mix of urban and rural areas, and into Monterey and San Joaquin counties, which are predominantly rural. PREP's target population includes individuals ages 14 to 35 within their first two years of experiencing psychosis. Eligible diagnoses include not just schizophrenia disorder, but also schizophreniform and schizoaffective disorders. The program lasts up to two years.

When it expands into a new area, the Felton Institute provides training to county behavioral health agencies and works closely with the county to ensure that the program is implemented to fidelity. Felton plays a strong role in workforce development when they initiate a new PREP program. County support of the program varies between counties.

The outcomes show that the PREP program provides a marked improvement in both positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia. Over one half of clients showed an improvement one and two years after entering the program on positive symptoms. Three-fourth of clients showed an improvement after one year on negative symptoms and 95% of clients showed an improvement on negative symptoms after two years.

In every site, the number of hospital visits among clients in PREP decreased before and after treatment by an average of 47%. In every site as well, the average number of days spent in the hospital per visit also decreased before and after treatment by an average of 59%.

Adriana also discussed ways in which the PREP program has begun to expand and how she envisions it will further expand. In addition to the original PREP model that targets clients with schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, the Felton Institute also operates the Felton BEAM program that targets bipolar disorders and depressive disorder with psychotic features. Felton also is considering resources for individuals with a clinical high risk for psychosis. Finally, Felton is considering ways to provide aftercare to graduates of the PREP program as there is little evidence on what the appropriate length of treatment should be for individuals with psychosis.

Peer Support at PREP

Philip Hershon is a peer support specialist in the PREP program. Philip discussed his own experiences and the tremendous isolation that an individual undergoes when they first experience psychosis. Philip described the use of peer support in PREP.

Philip emphasized that individuals experiencing psychosis often choose to isolate themselves physically, by not seeing others. In addition, individuals experiencing psychosis may also feel isolated because they believe that nobody can understand their experiences and do not believe they can connect with others. Philip described how the important first step for him is to establish a connection with someone. It may take time for individuals with psychosis to begin to recognize the peer as a someone who can relate to them.

Philip described how overcoming isolation can strengthen someone's recovery and create a thick support network. Beyond connecting with individuals one-on-one, Philip also describes how creating an environment in which people experiencing psychosis can socialize with one another creates a powerful peer support network that extends far beyond PREP. He often tries to schedule group meetings to coincide with community concerts and other activities, so that after the meeting people can stay and socialize. He also recounted that when he had to miss a group meeting because he was out of town, group members stepped in to run the meeting themselves.

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