

Improving the Physical Health of Adults with Serious Mental Illness

The **Bridges to Better Health and Wellness (B2BHW)** and **Peer-Led Group Healthy Lifestyle Balance (PGLB)** projects seek to eliminate health and healthcare inequities among racial and ethnic minorities with serious mental illness (SMI) by blending implementation science, health disparities research, and community engaged scholarship.

The Impact

The B2BHW and PGLB projects resulted in *clinical* and *community* benefits.

By tailoring strategies to reach minority populations, the projects improved participant involvement in health care, primary care use, and health indicators. Rather than clinical staff, B2BHW uses masters-level social workers to connect patients to primary care services, an expanding workforce that now provides most of the mental health care in the U.S. PGLB also connects primary care to a growing service sector for people with SMI, supportive housing. These approaches enhance relevance and increase patient engagement with their health care by developing interventions that are accessible and can be delivered in routine practice settings.

The Challenge

People with SMI die 13 to 30 years earlier than the general population, largely due to preventable medical conditions. Racial and ethnic minorities with SMI must contend with additional barriers to accessing high quality medical care, including language barriers, mistrust of the health care system, and the intersection of stigma toward mental illness, racism, and discrimination.

The Approach

To address these challenges, a multidisciplinary team developed two projects:

- B2BHW adapts a health care manager intervention for Hispanics with SMI who are at risk for cardiovascular disease, using social workers in outpatient mental health clinics to connect patients to primary care services.
- PGLB delivers healthy lifestyle interventions in supportive housing agencies by people with lived experiences with SMI, known as peer specialists.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- B2BHW increased participants' **involvement in their health care, self-efficacy** in managing chronic medical conditions, and **use of preventive primary care services**.
- PGLB participants showed greater **weight loss**, improved **cardiorespiratory fitness**, and reduced **cardiovascular disease risk** compared to people receiving usual medical care.

Key TSBM Impacts



CLINICAL

Developed a treatment manual and guidelines for training and supervising health care managers and peer specialists



COMMUNITY

Created culturally and linguistically appropriate patient education materials



COMMUNITY

Increased preventive primary care and patients' involvement in their own medical care



COMMUNITY

Improved health care delivery by connecting people with SMI to primary care services



COMMUNITY

Obese people with SMI reported weight loss, increased in cardiorespiratory fitness, and reduced risk for cardiovascular disease

The team:

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