

**Providing Psychiatric Services in Under-Served Areas:
How Managed Behavioral Health Services and Telemedicine
Can Position Hospitals for the Future**

White Paper
Prepared by Horizon Health Behavioral Health Services



CLINICAL EXCELLENCE IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Is Your Hospital Fulfilling the Need for Psychiatric Services in Your Service Area?

- Are patients with psychiatric complications challenging your medical floors and emergency department with extended stays and poor outcomes?
- When psychiatric patients come to you for help, are you sending them outside of your organization and community for treatment, or are they languishing in your emergency department with limited access to appropriate resources?

Many hospitals do not have the specialty personnel or experience to provide behavioral health services. When a hospital refers a patient to another hospital for psychiatric treatment, they miss an opportunity to provide the full range of healthcare services for that patient. A well-managed behavioral health program can fill unmet community needs, improve the hospital's bottom-line, and preserve the continuity of medical and psychiatric care within the patient's home community.

“Medically ill populations are at increased risk for behavioral health problems, just as individuals with behavioral health problems are at higher risk for medical comorbidities. Failing to treat medical or psychiatric comorbidities decreases an individual's chances for successful recovery and overall health.”¹ The movement towards accountable care and performance-based reimbursement is driving a re-integration of physical and mental healthcare. Effective management of chronic illnesses and high risk/high resource patients is essentially impossible without access to behavioral health programs and providers.

Telemedicine Can Remove Barriers to Psychiatric Care

Patients face many barriers to receiving psychiatric treatment. These barriers can seem insurmountable for individuals who are living in under-served areas where psychiatric care is limited or even non-existent. The experience of individuals in those areas differs in important ways. “In geographically remote areas, many people with mental illnesses have inadequate access to care, limited availability of skilled care providers... and greater social stigma for seeking mental health treatment than their urban counterparts.”²

Telemedicine (the delivery of healthcare at a distance via technology) offers a way to improve access to care in communities in which the recruitment of in-person medical specialists is difficult. Hospitals now have the ability to develop inpatient and outpatient psychiatric programs, supported by ‘telepsychiatrists’ providing care from another location. These psychiatrists work in conjunction with the hospital's behavioral health program staff and local medical physicians to coordinate and manage care.

Through telemedicine:

- Healthcare professionals have the ability to remotely diagnose, monitor, and treat patients in under-served areas.
- Local physicians have the ability to consult with distant specialists about challenging medical situations.
- Hospitals can access scarce specialists, provide coverage for after hours and weekend calls, and improve outcomes and efficiency through better management of chronic illnesses.
- Patients have the ability to access specialty care in a timely manner, without leaving their home community.

“Using technology to break down distance barriers, remotely connecting specialists with patients needing advanced medical treatment, and allowing greater exchange of images and health data are just a few of the advantages of widespread deployment of telemedicine....A population surge, coupled with an expected shortage of healthcare professionals, over the coming decades, accentuates the need for telemedicine.”³

*Matthew A. Hein, International Trade Specialist
U.S. Department of Commerce
Office of Health and Consumer Goods*

Telemedicine is a value-added option for your hospital that will provide cost savings, expand services, and improve collaboration between professionals who want an opportunity to work more effectively as a team. Telemedicine can be an essential ingredient for hospitals interested in extending mental health services to primary care offices, medical floors, emergency departments and skilled nursing facilities.

The Horizon Solution

Horizon Health Behavioral Health Services is a psychiatric contract management organization that has a demonstrated record of helping hospitals deliver specialty medical care to under-served communities. With years of innovative telemedicine experience, Horizon is able to offer turnkey telepsychiatry solutions to its hospital partners. Horizon’s team of development experts will work with you from the beginning to secure proper equipment, recruit psychiatrists, train appropriate staff, and establish and facilitate telemedicine services to provide remote psychiatric care.

Horizon’s client hospitals also benefit from Horizon’s financial and marketing guidance, resulting in programs with positive fiscal performance that strengthen the hospital’s position in the delivery of behavioral health services in the community.

Patients face many barriers to receiving psychiatric treatment. Reach out to an organization with a demonstrated record of providing clinically-exceptional psychiatric solutions to address the unmet healthcare needs of a community.

Contact:
Jack DeVaney, President
800.727.2407
bhs@horizonhealth.com

References

1. Connecting Body and Mind: A Resource Guide to Integrated Health Care in Texas and the United States. Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, 2008.
2. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. 2012.pg3. Available at: http://www.nami.org/PrinterTemplate.cfm?Section=New_Freedom_Commission&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&contentID=28338.
3. Hein MA. Telemedicine: An Important Force in the Transformation of Healthcare. Available at: http://www.ita.doc.gov/td/health/telemedicine_2009.pdf.

Prepared by Horizon Health Behavioral Health Services

HORIZON

HEALTH

**Behavioral Health Services
1965 Lakepointe Drive
Lewisville, TX 75057
972.420.8300
800.727.2407
Fax: 972.420.8383
www.horizonhealth.com**