Addressing the Science-Practice Gap: Evidence Synthesis & Dissemination of Mental Health Care Topics in the Military Health System

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To support knowledge translation and dissemination in the Military Health System (MHS) and promote evidence-based practices, the Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC) established an evidence-synthesis and dissemination capability. This multi-phased effort is described below, concluding with a listing of current products and brief discussion of next steps.

**Phase I:** Enhance knowledge and expertise in evidence synthesis methodologies, and develop a suite of evidence synthesis products.

Existing evidence synthesis centers were identified to gain insights about expertise and resource requirements that would enable DHCC to stand up an Evidence Synthesis and Dissemination (ES&D) team.

- **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Evidence-based Practice Centers (EPC)**
- **Department of Veterans Affairs Evidence-based Synthesis Program (VA ESP)**

ES&D team members completed in-person skill-building workshops and online training programs to develop skills in evidence synthesis methodologies.

- **Cochrane approach to conducting systematic reviews**
- **GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation) approach** to evaluating quality of evidence

The team secured a collaborative partnership with RAND Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) to minimize potential biases in conducting systematic reviews.

**The Systematic Review Process**

The goal of DHCC ES&D is to use systematic, rigorous, and transparent methods to produce various types of evidence synthesis reports that can inform and promote evidence-based psychological health practices and policies in the MHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame the Question</th>
<th>Search Strategy</th>
<th>Screen</th>
<th>Select Studies</th>
<th>Summarize Evidence</th>
<th>Interpret Evidence</th>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Table 6</th>
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**ES&D Products of Varying Scope**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psych Health Evidence Briefs</th>
<th>Rapid Reviews</th>
<th>Systematic Reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To inform patients and providers about the current evidence base and clinical guidance for specific treatments.</td>
<td>To inform time-sensitive health care decisions that are not addressed in existing VA/DOD clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) or reviews.</td>
<td>To inform VA/DOD CPGs and other MHS policy decisions by identifying evidence-based health care practices.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;a&quot; [intervention] recommended for treating [condition]?</th>
<th>Narrow eligibility criteria and search strategy</th>
<th>Summary of clinical guidance and current evidence base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited number of key questions or outcomes of interest</td>
<td>Summary of evidence; may include qualitative synthesis</td>
<td>No critical appraisal</td>
</tr>
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**Next Steps – Measure Impact**

- **Product Impact Metrics**
  - **Survey.** are included on the Psych Health Evidence Briefs webpage to solicit readers’ feedback.
  - **A user-feedback survey** is being implemented to assess the acceptability, usability, and impact of ESD reports that are produced in response to MHS stakeholder topic nominations.

**Refine ES&D Processes**

- **ES&D plans to utilize user feedback, as well as internal lessons-learned to refine and further streamline topic selection and product development processes.**

**Phase II: Develop standard processes to solicit stakeholder input.**

This includes giving the general public the opportunity to submit and vote for topics for Psych Health Evidence Briefs, as well as the development of a formal nomination form for key stakeholders to submit targeted evidence synthesis questions or topics for rapid reviews, systematic reviews, and evidence maps.

**Phase III: Refine and sustain existing ES&D capabilities.**

DHCC ES&D is collecting stakeholder feedback and identifying additional ways to measure the impact and reach of our products. As visibility of ES&D capabilities increases across the MHS, efforts are focused on streamlining internal processes to most effectively and efficiently prioritize pertinent topics and team resources.

**Psych Health Evidence Briefs**

Fifteen Psych Health Evidence Briefs have been produced and posted on the DHCC website, including treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), and alcohol/substance use disorders (AUD/SUD).

- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for MDD**
- **Cannabis for PTSD**
- **Emotional Freedom Technique for PTSD**
- **Problem-Solving Therapy for MDD**
- **Short-term Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for MDD**

**Rapid Reviews**

Rapid reviews are produced by implementing strategic alterations to the systematic review methodology, which aim to minimize the introduction of bias while addressing time-sensitive evidence synthesis questions.

In response to a stakeholder request with a one-month timeframe, we recently conducted our first rapid review.

- **Outpatient Behavioral Health Provider Panel Size and Burnout in the Military Health System (MHS)**

**Systematic Reviews & Evidence Maps**

DHCC currently sponsors a series of systematic reviews conducted by the RAND EPC to identify and address gaps in psychological health care.

- **Series 1:** Ten reports focused on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) interventions for PTSD, MDD, and chronic pain.
- **Series 2:** Five reports are underway, including systematic reviews and evidence maps of psychological health research that address gaps in practice.

In-progress internal products include:

- **"Present-centered therapy (PCT) for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adults," a Cochrane systematic review.**
- **"Gambling Disorder and Problem Gambling: An Evidence Map"**

**REFERENCES**

2. Collaborators and related organizations:
   - Evidence-based Practice Centers (EPC) Program of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
   - Cochrane
   - GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation) Working Group
   - RAND Southern California Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC)
   - VA Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP)