

Screening Patients for Depression

Benefits and Barriers

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INTRODUCTION

The Behavioral Health Department at North Shore Community Health (NSCH) is committed to providing cost-effective, extensive, and attainable care to all its patients. Staff members work hard to help patients build skills to overcome medical, physical, interpersonal, and socioeconomic challenges. They also strive to improve the overall health and well-being of patients (Maxfield, 2020).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where patients were not able to go to the clinic, members of the Behavioral Health Department began screening patients for depression using the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2), Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), and Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) questionnaires. The PHQ-2 and PHQ-9 questionnaires ask patients to rank how often they have been bothered by certain issues over the past two weeks. The SDOH questionnaire asks patients questions about their access to food, housing, and transportation factors that are critical for living a healthy life.

Having access to this information allows the Behavioral Health Department and other health care providers to respond to patients' needs by providing comprehensive care and useful resources. NSCH has also been measuring and comparing statistics across other healthcare clinics in the area. They have been exploring how race, gender, language, and other factors influence overall screening rates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Depression is a highly prevalent condition in primary care. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 280 million people in the world have depression (World Health Organization, 2021). Depression affects individuals in many ways. Levels of severity also vary greatly. Siniscalchi et al (2020) states that "untreated depression causes emotional suffering, reduced productivity, lost wages, impaired relationships, and increased comorbidity risk."

Depression screenings and treatment in primary care lead to early identification and interventions. It is recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) that individuals over the age of 18 get screened for depression (American Family Physician, 2016). "Despite the wide availability of effective treatments for depression and virtually universal health insurance coverage for older adults in the U.S. under the Medicare program, depression in older adults remains underdiagnosed and undertreated (Colligan et al., 2020)." The two reasons for that include stigma and lack of resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the preferred method for filling out the questionnaires (email, patient portal, asked in person, or via the phone.)
- Identify how often patients are likely/willing to complete the questionnaires (annually, every six months, or only when they come in for a checkup.)
- Determine the benefits and barriers of completing the questionnaires.
- Conclude what health care providers can do to help patients complete the questionnaires and seek assistance.

METHODS/MATERIALS

- Screen patients on the Behavioral Health Department list, over the age of 18, for depression via the phone using the PHQ-2, PHQ-9, and SDOH questionnaires.
 - Ask if they are open to completing additional screenings in the future.
 - Ask what their preferred method for completing the assessment is.
 - Ask how often they would like to complete the assessment.
- Identify common themes in patients' responses using the information gathered from the questionnaires.
- Analyze findings and conclude how health care providers can assist patients.

Patient Health Questionnaires
PHQ-2: Two Question Depression Screening

1. Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
A. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
B. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
Totals	0	1	2	3

Scoring: A PHQ-2 ranges from 0-6; patients with scores of 3 or more should be further evaluated with the PHQ-9, other diagnostic instrument(s), or a direct interview to determine whether they meet criteria for a depressive disorder.

PHQ-9: Required if PHQ-2 is Positive

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
C. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
D. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
E. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
F. Feeling bad about yourself-or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
G. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
H. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite-being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
I. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way	0	1	2	3
Totals	0	1	2	3

2. If you are experiencing any of the problems on this form, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home or get along with other people?

	Not difficult at all	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Score, Severity, Treatment:
0-4 = Minimal - None
5-9 = Mild - Watchful waiting; repeat PHQ-9 at follow up
10-14 = Moderate - Treatment plan, considering counseling, follow-up/pharmacotherapy
15-19 = Moderately Severe - Active treatment with pharmacotherapy and/or psychotherapy
20-27 = Severe - Immediate initiation of pharmacotherapy and, if severe impairment or poor response to therapy, expedited referral to a mental health specialty for psychotherapy and/or collaborative management

C3 SDOH Screening Tool

Completed: In-Person By Mail By Phone By Email Other

1. What is your housing situation today?
 a. I do not have housing (staying with others in a hotel/shelter/living outside on the street/on a beach/in a car or in a park)
 b. I have housing today but I am worried about losing housing in the future
 c. I have housing
 d. I am not sure

2. Think about the place you live. Do you have problems with any of the following?
 a. Pets such as bugs/ants/mice
 b. Mold
 c. Lead paint or pipes
 d. Inadequate heat
 e. Oven or stove not working
 f. No or not working smoke detectors
 g. Water leaks
 h. None of the above
 i. I am not sure

3. Within the past 12 months, were you worried that your food would run out before you got money to buy more?
 a. Often true
 b. Sometimes true
 c. Never true

4. Within the past 12 months, the food you bought just didn't last and you didn't have enough money to get more?
 a. Often true
 b. Sometimes true
 c. Never true

5. In the past 12 months, has lack of transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work or from getting things needed for daily living?
 a. Yes - It has kept me from medical appointments or getting medications
 b. Yes - It has kept me from non-medical meetings/appts/work or getting things I need
 c. No
 d. I am not sure

6. In the past 12 months has the electric, gas, oil, or water company threatened to shut off services in your home?
 a. Yes
 b. No
 c. Already shut off
 d. I am not sure

7. Do you want help finding or keeping work or a job?
 a. Yes - help finding work
 b. Yes - help keeping work
 c. I do not need or want help
 d. I am not sure

Additional Questions

14. We would like to hear from patients regarding how you feel about answering these types of screening questions over the phone. Are you willing to answer some additional questions regarding your thoughts on this?

Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following based on the scale from 1-5, where 1 is Strongly Agree, 2 - Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree.

I am open to completing additional screening questions like the ones we completed today over the phone in the future.

1 2 3 4 5

15. What is your preferred method for filling out the assessment?

Email
 Patient Portal
 Asked in-person
 Asked via the phone

16. How often would you like to complete this assessment?

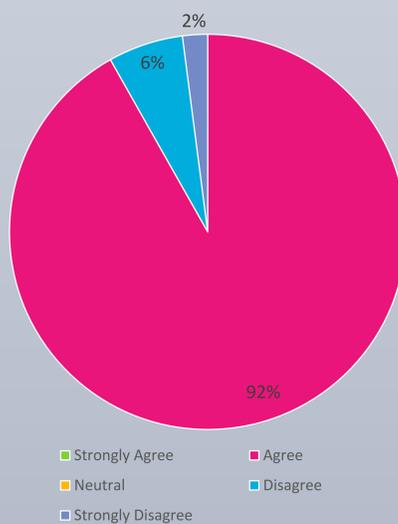
Yearly
 Every 6 months
 Only when I come in for a check-up

RESULTS

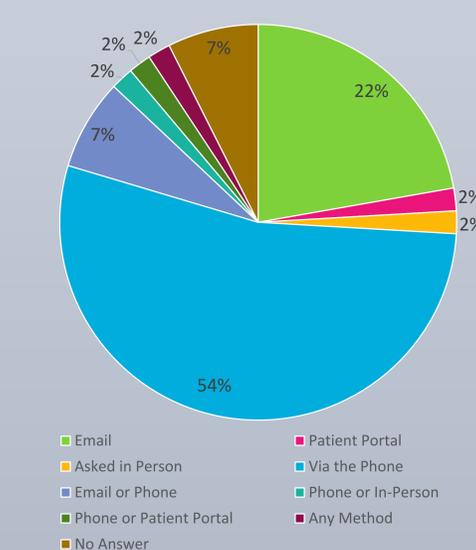
Benefits of Screening:

- Helps identify potential depression in patients
- Helps with the reduction and remission of depression symptoms

Are you open to completing additional screenings in the future?



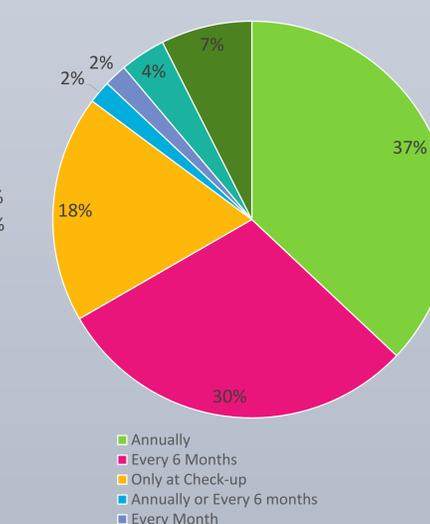
What is your preferred method for completing the assessment?



Barriers of Screening:

- Culture/language
- Hours of operation
- Lack of trust

How often would you like to complete the assessment?



CONCLUSIONS

How can health care providers help patients complete the questionnaires and seek assistance?

- Offer translation services
- Provide a list of community resources
- Call patients for check-ups
- Assist with scheduling appointments
- Offer extended hours for appointments
- Build a safe environment for patients to discuss their health concerns
 - Practice patient-centered care
 - Understand patients' culture
 - Have a positive and willing attitude
 - Be polite and supportive
 - Practice good communication skills
 - Initiate a rapid response system

This internship has been very advantageous for both my academic and professional growth. It has allowed me to explore different career options, expand my knowledge on depression and the process of being diagnosed, and it allowed me to network. I am very grateful for the opportunity I had to intern at NSCH. The staff has been incredible. They have supported me throughout the whole process. They have also guided me and provided additional support for my future academic career.

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