Evaluating Mental Health Needs of Patients at Urban Student-Run Free Clinic to Expand Services

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Introduction

- Cass Clinic is a student-run community clinic providing **free medical care** to patients in Detroit.[1]
- Established in 1981, the walk-in clinic has provided **longitudinal healthcare** to many lower income patients with chronic disease, such as hypertension and diabetes.[1]
- However, unlike some other clinics[2], Cass Clinic is not currently equipped to address **mental health concerns**, and the staff is unsure how to address this gap.

Project Objectives

The objectives of this quality improvement study are to:

1. Understand ongoing mental health needs of Cass Clinic's patient population
2. Provide direction on how current clinic services should be enhanced or expanded

Current Clinic Service Menu

Health Screenings
- Blood Pressure, BMI
- Total Lipid Panel
- Point-of-Care Glucose & HbA1c

Select Medications
- Over-the-counter medications
- Vitamins and supplements
- Prescription medications

Vaccines
- Covid-19 Primary Series + Boosters
- Seasonal Influenza

On-site Partner Services
- Sight Savers: Vision screening
- Lions Hearing: Hearing screening
- BCCCP: Breast & cervical cancer screening

Fig. 1. Current services offered free-of-charge at Cass Clinic.

Methods

An **anonymous multiple-choice survey** was provided to all patients to understand current mental health needs, ongoing mental health concerns, attitudes towards mental health services, and social determinants of health that may affect mental health.

Outline of Mental Health Survey Question Topics	
Background	• Past mental health diagnoses • Past mental health treatments and hospitalizations • Family history of mental health or psychiatric issues
Current Attitudes	• Attitude towards mental health stigma • Openness to seek support from others • Comfort discussing mental health with physician
Current Barriers	• Social determinants affecting general wellbeing and mental health • Barriers, including physical and intangible, to seeking mental health services
Current Needs	• Current interest in various mental health services

Table 1. Outline of topics covered in survey provided to patients.

Conclusion

- Evaluation of mental health needs for lower income patients in Detroit revealed a notable demand for not only **counseling** and **psychiatric services**, but also **social work services** to address social determinants of health.
- Preliminary results indicate that conducting needs assessment via surveying patients can yield **tangible directions on how to expand or improve healthcare services at any clinic.**

References

1. Cass Clinic. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from https://www.cassclinic.com/
2. Knoll, O., Chakravarthy, R., Cockroft, J. D., Baddour, N., Jordan, S., Weaver, E., Fowler, M. J., & Miller, R. F. (2021). Addressing Patients' Mental Health Needs at a Student-Run Free Clinic. *Community mental health journal*, *57*(1), 196–202. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-020-00634-3

Results

Although data collection is still ongoing, preliminary results (n=24) reveal:

- **25%** report experience with **substance abuse** (including addiction and alcoholism)
- **25%** report experience with **depression**
- **75%** hold attitudes that are receptive to receiving mental health **support from a health professional**
- Evaluating social determinants of health notably revealed concerns of:
  - Not having a **stable source of income** (12%)
  - **Losing housing** within next 2 months (21%)
  - Been threatened with **shutting off utility services (electric, gas, oil, or water)** within last 4 months (13%)

Fig. 2. Proposed new mental health services at Cass Clinic.