



Partnerships to Integrate Evidence-Based Mental Health Practices into Social Work Education and Research

Summary & Highlights
From April 12, 2007 Symposium
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I also would like to express appreciation to IASWR's interns who had major roles in pulling together this report and the background materials: Angela Ratkowski, MSW, and Alexandra Federer. In addition, the NIMH staff, social work leaders, representatives from national organizations (including the Anxiety Disorders Association of America and the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Research Institute, Inc.), and academic EBP innovators that were featured in the April 2007 meeting provided invaluable insights and perspectives.

This report is just one part of a multi-faceted effort within the social work profession to bridge research and practice with IASWR as a key player in these efforts. This report is one step to outline current efforts and to identify a series of actionable items that can be taken by multiple stakeholders to expand research and to further integrate both the evidence-based practice process and specific evidence-based mental health treatments into education and practice.

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April 12, 2007

Bethesda, Maryland

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Office for Special Populations, National Institute of Mental Health

Introduction

The purpose of the workshop was to develop strategies to accelerate integration of evidence-based mental health practices (EBPs) into social work practice via academic social work programs. As many schools already provide some education and training in EBPs, these settings are an efficient means to amplify impact via strategic partnerships.

Enhancing the science base of clinical training is responsive to the NIMH National Advisory Mental Health Council report, “The Road Ahead: Research Partnerships to Transform Services” which specifically mentions improving clinical training as an avenue for enhancing “*the likelihood that effective interventions are implemented and sustained in real-world settings.*”

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS

School Perspective on EPB Training

Rapidly moving science into practice will involve developing not only capable practitioners but also organizational strategies for coordination and service system change. The schools’ core activities—academics, field training, and research—can be leveraged to accomplish this goal. EBP challenges, outcomes, and priorities in specific service settings must be identified by field placement agencies to inform social work training, education, and research.

State Perspective on EBP Training

The shortage of Master’s degreed clinicians has been reported by state mental health commissioners. In addition, following recommendations of the President’s New Freedom Commission, some states now support only the provision of selected EBPs, further fuelling the states’ interest in workforce development. States can contribute to social work education by providing field training opportunities. Other relevant federal agencies include the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA), and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS).

Evidence-Based Psychotherapies

There is a need for broader availability of evidence-based psychotherapies and there is limited provision of training in specific psychotherapies in academic professional programs, including social work. As the largest producer of mental health professionals, social work schools can

increase availability of evidence-based psychotherapy through targeted clinical training that should include both didactic instruction and supervised clinical experience.

Remarks From the NIMH Director—Thomas Insel, MD

Dr. Insel saw the discussion as very important, particularly as it leads to action items addressing the gap between research and practice. The group noted that, along with clinical specialty, schools of social work offer “macro”-level training, including specialization in policy, planning and program development, and human services management, which are also relevant to EBP delivery.

Teaching EBPs in the Social Work Curriculum

The Columbia University School of Social Work has integrated EBP in both classroom and field instruction. The process revealed barriers to EBPs, including: limits in knowledge and training, non-supportive agency culture, limited time and resources, and lack of information infrastructure within agencies. The Columbia University approach orients to EBP on two levels: 1) specific training in EBPs and 2) the ability to develop strategies when evidence is not codified.

A State Model for Collaborative Curricula Enhancement

The New York State Office of Mental Health and the deans and directors of social work schools in that state conduct a collaborative program to produce an EBP-prepared workforce. Over 6 years, the collaborative developed a required course, selected an evaluation instrument, and pilot-tested implementation. In some sites, program expansion has necessitated the hiring of agency staff to provide EBP mentoring. The program now awards a certificate and provides job referral.

Culturally-Appropriate Care

Provision of culturally-appropriate mental health care is a national priority. It is important to consider that only a small number of studies have shown that culturally-adapted EBPs are effective and that the standard outcome measures used in many studies may not have validity and reliability across groups. Thus, there is a need for more research in this area.

Field Placement: Partnering Between Schools and Agencies

The University of Michigan School of Social Work has three recent activities to foster evidence-based practice: field-specific collaboratives, information literacy development, and mini-courses. Developing and implementing these involved a focus on communication between the academic and field placement partners to develop a mutual understanding of needs.

Field Unit Training

The University of Southern California School of Social Work has aligned some of its field training with the California Mental Health Services Act, which reimburses for selected evidence-based interventions (EBI). Students are trained in a selected EBI and then transport the EBI into agency practice. The training includes seminars and group supervision, along with fidelity monitoring, linkage to organizational priorities, and developing supportive internal culture.

National Mental Health Workforce Development

SAMHSA commissioned the Annapolis Coalition to create an action plan for mental health workforce development. Recommendations were: 1) foster greater community involvement in

workforce issues, 2) implement recruitment and retention strategies at all levels, 3) increase the relevance and accessibility of mental health training and education, 4) develop workforce leadership, and 5) enhance infrastructure to support these efforts.

Stakeholder Perspectives

The director of a private practice treatment group outlined the challenge of finding clinicians competent in evidence-based treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for anxiety disorders. Improving the relevance of field training may be a useful approach to this problem.

Consumer Perspective

A consumer described her long and difficult experience in obtaining effective treatment for panic disorder. The barriers she faced included: obtaining an accurate diagnosis, obtaining concrete treatment recommendations, and affording treatment.

Summaries of Roundtable Discussions

Roundtable discussions covered three relevant topics (see below). There was a consensus on the need to develop a strategic plan and series of conferences/meetings to implement the plan. This broad effort will require various mechanisms of support, including those available via NIMH. Additional comments included the following:

Programmatic and Organizational Issues

Research on systems-level factors relevant to social work practice would provide a valuable, ongoing resource for EBP implementation in both education and practice. In addition, there is a significant need for greater faculty capacity to teach and conduct research on social work EBPs in various community settings and with multi-problem clients. Testing of strategies for optimal academic and field training collaboration was seen as a much needed component of integration.

Selecting EBPs for Education Programs

Selection of EBPs requires two components: 1) determination of which interventions and practices are valid and relevant and 2) an understanding of the needs and capacities of field training sites. Continuing to refine mechanisms for designating EBPs will contribute to this task along with routinely dedicating some portion of field work to formal training in EBPs. Educational needs must be addressed at every level, from certificate programs to doctoral programs, whose graduates will teach EBPs to the next generation of practitioners.

Identifying and Partnering with Relevant Stakeholders

Progress toward EBP integration will require input that crosses agencies, stakeholder groups, government levels, schools of social work, and guilds. To produce a workforce best prepared to meet the needs of clients served by local agencies, development of EBP curriculum should be informed by service agency task forces, which identify the local issues, challenges, goals, and needs. Documentation and broad dissemination of existing, exemplary programs was also recommended.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

The Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) is a 501 c(3), non-profit organization, based in Washington, DC and launched in 1993. The mission of the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) is to advance the scientific knowledge base of social work practice by building the research capacity of the profession, by increasing support and opportunities for social work research, and by promoting linkages among the social work practice, research, and education communities. IASWR's purposes are to:

- ◆ Promote the development, support, and use of social work research on problems of serious concern to society.
- ◆ Promote social work research and the dissemination of research findings in order to improve practice, program development, and social policy that will enhance the quality of life for all people.
- ◆ Promote interdisciplinary as well as social work partnerships in order to advance the scientific basis for solving social problems.

IASWR's supporting organizations include the Association for Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors, the Council on Social Work Education, the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education, the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, the National Association of Social Workers, and the Society for Social Work and Research. For more information about IASWR visit www.iaswresearch.org.