

The Medical Cost Offset Effect: Mental Health Intervention

What is the medical cost offset effect?

When a health intervention occurs, it leads to a decrease in general medical utilization. When overall health care savings exceed the cost of the mental health treatment, this is known as the medical cost offset effect.

Why does this effect happen?

Individuals with mental health issues are substantial users of medical services such as urgent care, emergency care and primary care services. Conditions such as depression and anxiety affect about 20% of the population and can manifest as physical symptoms such as high blood pressure, headaches, muscle tension, insomnia, or digestive issues. Without proper diagnosis and treatment, patients fall into a cycle of seeking medical attention for idiopathic issues caused by their mental health issues.

How often do individuals with mental health issues seek appropriate help?

Research suggests only 5% of individuals with a mental health disorder will actively seek help from a mental health professional. The other 95% will seek treatment from a primary care provider. Between 11-36% of recurrent primary care visits involve patients with conditions related to identifiable and treatable mental health issues.

How can you identify patients who may have mental health issues?

Consider implementing a best practice of proactive mental health screenings with every patient. Screening tools such as the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ9), the Healthy Living Questionnaire, The Kessler 6 & 10, and the Patient Stress Questionnaire are standardized questions that can help identify individuals with mental health issues.

What does a mental health issue look like?

It is important to note that no two mental health issues look the same. You may have a patient who comes in regularly with high blood pressure and stomach pains due to generalized anxiety. You could have a patient who has gained weight, has trouble sleeping and increased appetite due to depression. This is why it is important to screen every patient when they come for their yearly physical and screen all new patients.

If you identify a patient who might have a mental health a mental health issue based on the results of a standardized screening tool, give Peace River Center a call today and to schedule their mental health evaluation at 863-248-3311. You may also fax a referral to the registrar at 863-413-2719. If your patient is experiencing a mental health crisis, remember Peace River Center's Mobile Crisis Response Team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 863-519-3744.