



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

EVIDENCE BASED INTERVENTIONS MAY PREVENT MENTAL DISORDERS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TO REDUCE DISABILITY

Effective evidence based protocols may prevent mental disorders and substance abuse.

A forum was held by the George Washington Medical Center to make recommendations on preserving mental health and preventing substance abuse. Advocates from provider and consumer groups for effective mental health and substance abuse policies attended the forum.

Summary

The issue of evidence based practices to prevent mental disorders and substance abuse in community settings was raised as an issue at the forum. There are two distinctly different approaches to evidence based practice for mental health preservation. One is based on procedures associated with biological pathologies to improve clinical professional decisions linked to better health care outcomes. The other approach involves empirically tested interventions specific to measured socially validated behavior of an individual with personnel trained in behavioral sciences principles that can be replicated and widely disseminated with defined populations and under specified conditions. The biomedical interventions for preserving mental health and preventing substance abuse are widely distributed by the pharmaceutical industry and regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. Community and family behavioral based interventions lie outside of biological medical practice and are few and not widely disseminated or regulated.

Disability Prevention Issues

There are few evidence based behavioral approaches that are widely disseminated that could prevent substance abuse and mental health disorders. For instance, implementation of positive behavioral supports (BPS) in education settings can be utilized to prevent mental disorders and substance abuse problems in schools. The BPS has been researched and found to be an effective method that targets the individual through addressing the child's issues through individuals in the child's environment. Behavioral principles are applied to achieve socially validated measurable outcomes determined by both parents and school authorities. However, examination of the schools finds few successful BPS plans that have been effective for individual students. Effective implementation of protocols like BPSs targeted to prevent mental health disorders and/or substance abuse may prevent diminished health that can lead to disability.

Intervention

A letter was written to the director of the forum to comment on the relevance of evidence based practices of behavioral interventions to prevent mental health and substance abuse.

Recommendation

It is recommended that emphasis be placed on development and wide dissemination of evidence based protocols based on the behavioral sciences for prevention of mental health disorders and substance abuse.