



Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition
Opening Doors for Older Pennsylvanians

News You Can Use...

August 27, 2010

Understanding Depression, Anxiety and Suicide in Older Adults – Training Offers CEUs

The Coalition is offering training on understanding depression, anxiety and suicide in older adults in six locations across the state. Learn about late life depression, the correlation between depression and medical illness, treatment for anxiety, and evidence based practices for older adults with behavioral issues. CEUs will be offered.

More information is available at www.olderpa.org under "What's New."

New Cognitive Impairment Screening

One of the constant challenges in the field of Alzheimer's disease is that the illness is routinely detected too late in today's medical environment. The data show that diagnoses are most common in years 8-10 of a typical disease course that runs 14 years. This means that the opportunity for early treatment, when the brain is still quite healthy, is very difficult to achieve.

Beginning in January of 2011, however, Medicare will reimburse primary care physicians to perform a more complete "Welcome to Medicare" visit with newly eligible members. They will also pay physicians to perform a complete "Wellness Visit" on an annual basis. Both the welcome visit and the wellness visit will include "detection of cognitive impairment". This is an important provision that calls for cognitive impairment screening for Medicare beneficiaries under the healthcare re-form proposal, "America's Healthy Future Act of 2009."

Source: Alzheimer's Disease Information Network August 2010 E-Newsletter.



Increasing Substance Abuse Levels Among Older Adults Means Sharp Rise in Need for Treatment

The need for substance abuse treatment among Americans over age 50 projected to double by 2020.

A study done by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) indicates that the aging of the baby boom generation is resulting in a dramatic increase in levels of illicit drug use among adults 50 and older. These increases may require the doubling of substance abuse treatment services needed for this population by 2020, according to the report.

"This new data has profound implications for the health and well-being of older adults who continue to abuse substances," said SAMHSA Administrator, Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "These findings highlight the need for prevention programs for all ages as well as to establish improved screening and appropriate referral to treatment as part of routine health care services."

Substance abuse at any age is associated with numerous health and social problems, but age-related physiological and social changes make older adults more vulnerable to the harmful effect of illicit drugs use.

The latest SAMHSA short report, *Illicit Drug Use among Older Adults*, shows that an estimated 4.3 million adults aged 50 or older (4.7 percent) used an illicit drug in the past year. Although marijuana use was more common than nonmedical use of prescription drugs for adults age 50 to 59, among those aged 65 and older, nonmedical use of prescription drugs was more common than marijuana.

The full report is available online at:

<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/168/168OlderAdults.cfm>

Source: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration — January 8, 2010

“Villages” Let Elderly Grow Old at Home

An interesting article in USA Today discusses a grass-roots “village” movement to help people age in their own homes.

More information is available at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-07-26-aging26_ST_N.htm

Source: USA Today



Health Care Costs Much Higher for Older Adults with Depression Plus Other Medical Conditions

Medicare participants who have diabetes or congestive heart failure as well as depression have significantly higher health care costs than their counterparts who do not have co-existing depression.

Over one year, participants diagnosed with depression incurred about \$22,960 in total health care costs, while those without depression incurred costs of about \$11,956. Those with possible depression, based on depression screening or reported antidepressant use, incurred \$14,365.

Participants with diagnosed depression spent significantly more in nearly every health care cost category, including home health care, skilled nursing facility costs, outpatient care, inpatient care, physician charges, and medical equipment. However, they did not spend more money on specialty mental health care compared to their non-depressed counterparts. Mental health care costs accounted for less than 1 percent of total health care costs.

The results indicate that among these Medicare beneficiaries with chronic medical illness, those who also have depression have significantly higher health care costs. Moreover, many in this high-risk group are not getting needed mental health care, the researchers said. The researchers theorize that the higher Medicare cost-sharing associated with outpatient mental health care—50 percent compared to 20 percent co-payments for medical services—may be a major obstacle to such care. In addition, older adults may be less likely to seek mental health care if they perceive a stigma associated with it. The researchers conclude by suggesting that improving mental health care for this population may help decrease overall medical costs.

More information is available at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2009/health-care-costs-much-higher-for-older-adults-with-depression-plus-other-medical-conditions.shtml>

Cross Systems Collaboration Initiative

The Coalition's Integrative Case Conference Series (ICCS) is a monthly video/audio conference series targeting ideas and solutions for working with older adults with behavioral health issues. The series serves as a forum to discuss complicated cases with cross-system needs.

The Coalition and the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research have collaborated to develop a monthly video/audio conference to provide easily accessible technical assistance to the Aging, Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Systems individuals who work with older adults.

More information is available at www.olderPA.org/iccs.



The Affordable Care Act & Mental Health: An Update

Mental health is just as important to quality of life as physical health. For too long, mental health has taken a back seat to physical health in our health insurance system. Mental health parity laws, including rules issued by the Obama administration earlier this year, have taken important steps forward to stop the insurance company practice of arbitrarily limiting care for mental health or substance use disorders. Unfortunately, it can be difficult for people with mental health and substance use disorders to find affordable, quality coverage in the health insurance marketplace. Right now, estimates show that one-fifth to one-third of the uninsured are people with mental and substance use disorders.

The Affordable Care Act takes steps to change that:

- Right now, if you haven't been able to find health insurance due to a pre-existing mental health condition, you may be able to access the new Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan. Be sure to check out this section on this site; plans may vary depending on where you live.
- The first time you renew or purchase health coverage after September of this year, plans that offer coverage for dependents are required to extend that coverage until a young adult turns 26. Some plans are making this coverage available now, so you should check with your insurance company or employer.
- Starting in 2014, substance abuse or mental illness can no longer be used by insurers to deny coverage as a "pre-existing condition" – and insurers also won't be able to use those conditions to raise your premiums.
- Also in 2014, mental health and substance use disorder services will be part of the essential benefits package, a set of health care service categories that must be covered by certain plans, including all insurance policies that will be offered through the Exchanges, and Medicaid.

These reforms all work to make the health insurance marketplace a more accessible, affordable place for people with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

Source: HealthCare.gov.

<http://www.healthcare.gov/news/blog/mentalhealthupdate.html>

Now Recruiting Volunteers in the Central Region

The PA Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition is seeking older adult volunteers from across Central Pennsylvania to participate in a training pertaining to the aging process of older adults, which besides basic mental health issues, which can encompass depression, substance abuse and suicide prevention.

More information is available at www.olderPA.org/act.



Online Dementia Training Resource

The University of Virginia School of Medicine is launching Memory Commons (www.memorycommons.org), an interactive, educational website for health care professionals that focuses specifically on Alzheimer's Disease and dementia. Memory Commons employs multiple educational formats to encourage learning and advances in dementia and Alzheimer's disease care, as well as improve quality of care and access to the latest treatment guidelines. CEUs are available, some for a fee.

Source: Gerontology news, August 2010

Webinar – Preventing Suicide Among Older Adults

Older adults die by suicide at a higher rate than the national average. Every year, more than 5,000 Americans over the age of 65 die by suicide, a death toll that is largely preventable. Elderly white men have the highest rate of suicide of all demographic groups in the U.S. Although suicide rates of older Americans have been slowly declining for many years, older men and women of every race continue to die by suicide, and the need for prevention is urgent. The webinar, scheduled for September 14 at 3:00, reviews the research associated with suicide among older adults, including risk and protective factors and effective suicide prevention strategies. In addition, this webinar will specifically address the issue of suicide risk and prevention in the context of community programs and residential facilities.

More information is available at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/212444497>

Previous copies of PBHAC's News You Can Use are available on the website at www.olderPA.org/newsletter

