



WORKPLACE MANAGED CARE

RESOURCES/UPDATES by Fax

August 11, 1999

Vol. 1, Issue 12



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Care: Managed Care, Access, and Clinical Outcomes

James Kelly, BSN, RN, COHN-S

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses Journal, Vol. 45(9), September 1997

James Kelly reported on his review of available literature on substance abuse and mental health care access and outcome. He found a fragmented array of studies and concluded that the literature implies that the concept of managed care can work in substance abuse and mental health services. He noted, however, that the prime focus is on cost reduction and that a critical element missing from the equation is the clinical outcome measurement of the new treatment paradigms:

- Mental health and substance abuse problems are rapidly growing components of health care premiums and associated costs.
- Managed care has become an integral factor in the delivery of these services. This trend has elicited concerns about the negative impact of managed care on service access and clinical outcomes.
- Some managed care designs may actually discourage participation in treatment programs as well as reduce options available to clients. The treatment arena for most cases is also shifting from inpatient to outpatient care.
- Studies demonstrate the financial efficacy of managed care. However, insufficient data exist about the effects on clinical outcomes.
- The addition of an employee assistance program to the managed care process improves access and may positively affect clinical and financial outcomes.

Substance Abuse Mental Health Statistics Sourcebook, SAMHSA October 1995, Publication No. (SMA) 95-3064.

A combination of a variety of data systems to present a comprehensive and objective overview of substance abuse, mental illness, and co-occurring disorders in the United States.

- According to the National Comorbidity Survey, approximately 52 million people age 15 to 54 had some type of alcohol, drug abuse, or mental health (ADM) disorder within the past year. Of these, an estimated 20 million had substance abuse/dependence and 40 million had some form of mental disorder.
- 8 million people (4.5% of the 15-to-54 year old group) met criteria for both a mental disorder and substance abuse/dependence within the past year. Overall, 30% of the population had at least one ADM disorder in the past year, and the severity of their disorder varied.
- The average cost to cover expenditures for ADM treatment in 1990 was \$217 per person in the U.S. population.
- The per capita cost was estimated to be \$158 for individuals privately insured, compared with \$430 for members of the Medicaid population. (<http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/oasftp.htm>)

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