

Abstract

Introduction: Screening for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in high-risk patients can help identify patients who may require further intervention. Primary care clinics do not regularly screen patients for PTSD. This quality improvement project integrated the Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD) into primary care office visits with adults who scored ≥ 5 on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ9) and thus were considered high risk for PTSD.

Aims: No documented PTSD screening was completed pre-intervention during primary care office visits in three rural Midwestern clinics. This project aimed to screen 100% of patients for PTSD who scored ≥ 5 on the PHQ9 to identify adults at risk for PTSD who might benefit from further intervention.

Methods: Two in-person educational sessions and monthly reminders were provided to staff regarding the nature of PTSD and the importance of PTSD screening. Data were collected on the use of the PC-PTSD, PTSD diagnosis, and mental health referrals for 3 months pre and post education.

Results: Following education, the PC-PTSD was utilized in 28% of visits with patients who scored ≥ 5 on the PHQ9. PTSD listed as a visit problem increased 112% and mental health referrals with PTSD listed as a diagnosis increased 375%.

Conclusions: Findings demonstrate that PTSD education and implementation of PTSD screening for patients seen in rural primary care clinics can help identify patients at risk for PTSD and increase subsequent referral for mental health intervention.

Keywords: posttraumatic stress disorder, PC-PTSD, rural clinic, primary care, quality improvement