



Primary health care responses to onsite psychologist support

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ABSTRACT

With the aim of improving early intervention for mental disorders, the 'Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care' initiative is now providing funding for mental health specialists to work in Divisions of General Practice. A key determinant of how this innovation is received is likely to be the readiness on the part of General Practitioners (GPs) and their patients to accept psychological interventions. This paper reports a baseline study of the attitudes to integrated onsite psychological services, held by GPs, nonmedical staff, and patients at one large suburban family practice. An anonymous brief questionnaire was used to gather both ratings and comments. Information about the way the Psychologist worked was also collected. Surveys conducted in April 2001 and again one year later show welcoming attitudes to the Psychologist on the part of the practice staff and clients, with continuing reservations about the patients' need to pay fees, and GPs' continuing interest in learning more about mental health in primary care. Results are relevant to improved accessibility of community-level mental health care for common disorders.

Keywords

mental health care delivery, general practitioners, psychologists, multidisciplinary collaboration, referral