Project description

This study applies social network analysis methods to claims data on patterns of multi-provider care received by adults with serious mental illness (SMI). The goal is to identify characteristics of provider networks that are associated with patterns of care for physical health conditions, including quality of care measures and utilization of emergency department and inpatient services. The results will inform future policies that aim to improve care for this vulnerable population.

The project has two specific aims. First, we will identify and characterize networks of providers who treat adults with SMI in the Medicaid enrolled population. This will be accomplished using social network analysis methods which infer relationships among providers based on their participation in the treatment of the same patients. Provider networks will then be characterized with respect to common network metrics such as their size (e.g. number of providers), geographic location (urban vs. rural), diversity (number of distinct provider types), density (proportion of patients that are shared), and composition (e.g. includes a hospital or hospital based clinic). This analysis, which will be the first to examine networks of care treating adults with SMI, will produce the basic descriptive foundation for the development of integrated care measures. Second, using the identified networks we will examine associations between network-level measures and the quality of care for physical health conditions and utilization of emergency department and inpatient services.

The network-based measures developed in this project will advance research and provide policy-makers with new tools for promoting system integration. This project will thereby improve the effectiveness of efforts to reduce the 8-year disparity in life expectancy faced by adults with SMI. To maximize the impact of this work, detailed specifications of the final measures will be published for public use. Finally, results from this project will enable future research projects to investigate important aspects of health care delivery systems for adults with SMI that have not previously been studied.

1. Is the request consistent with the Transparency Initiative's goals and purpose?

Yes. This project advances the ability of consumers and policy makers to evaluate health care choices by investigating quality of care at the level of provider networks. The goals of transparency are advanced with minimal threat of disclosure of protected health information.

2. Are there real or potential conflicts of interest or anti-competitive concerns?

No. The researchers are employees of the RAND Corporation, a private non-profit policy research company. RAND researchers are required to follow strict guidelines regarding reporting and avoidance of individual and organizational conflict of interests that may impact any research activities.

3. If IRB approval is required, has the approval been granted?

Yes. Approval has been granted conditional on finalization of a data use agreement with the data provider. The proposal has been reviewed by the IRB of the RAND Corporation.

4. Does the data request contain the minimum information required?

Yes.

5. Does the request minimize the risk of re-identification of individuals?

Yes.

Project Participants

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