Considerations for Supervisors Working with Counselors
New to Integrated Healthcare Settings
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Introduction
• With a push for IHC, the Affordable Care Act calls for the use of mental health counselors in primary care settings.
• Researchers have found additional training in graduate programs and internships is required to work in integrated health care settings (Glueck, 2015).
• Additional training in health comorbidities, psychopharmacology, the practice of behavioral health consultations, and various ethical and legal considerations are necessary when working within integrated care settings.
• Specialized supervision in these areas is essential for appropriate training, consultation, and evaluation of these new skills and practices.

Integrated Health Care
IHC:
- integrating mental and behavioral health services within primary care settings
- team-based approach to deliver more collaborative and effective care for patients (Shim et al., 2012)

Counseling:
- “the provision of assistance and guidance in resolving personal, social, or psychological problems and difficulties, especially by a professional.” (Merriam-Webster, 2017)
  - Traditional weekly counseling may not apply in IHC

Behavioral Health Consultation (BHC):
- relates to a job description often given to counselors who collaborate with physicians to develop holistic care treatment plans and monitor client progress (Serrano & Monden, 2011).
  - The BHC model focuses on providing culturally competent care using brief interventions to reduce functional impairment due to various MH problems (Hunter, Goodie, Oordt, & Dobneyer, 2009).
    - Could be one and done, or with just a few follow-ups
  - BHCs provide succinct and action-oriented recommendations or feedback to PCPs in efforts to collaborate and provide an integrated, holistic treatment plan (Hunter et al., 2009).

New Competencies for IHC and Supervision Elements
• Beyond the basic training provided in mental health counseling graduate programs, clinical supervision to ensure counselors meet these new competencies is essential.
• Counselors working within a medical setting will need to be knowledgeable about:
  • physical and mental health comorbidities
  • psychosomatic health problems
  • medications
  • behavior health risks
  • various ethical and legal issues, and
  • other factors not often taught in most counseling programs such as warm hand offs
(Glueck, 2015; Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2015; Kaut & Dickenson, 2007; Kaut, 2011)

• Modified Elements of Counseling in IHC
  • 50 minutes sessions into 15-30 minutes
  • Shared treatment plans
  • Person-centered focus

• Barden, Conley, and Young (2015) discuss five competencies that are applicable when integrating health and wellness into mental health counseling:
  • Assessment
  • Intervention
  • Consultation
  • Research
  • Supervision

Things to Consider
• Ethical and Legal issues
• Shared treatment plans
• Counseling notes are different than medical notes
• Confidentiality
• Alcohol and Substance Use in Counseling
• Notes vs Patient Medical Records
• Relational issues
• Possible triangulation between supervisor, counselor, and other IHC team member
• Cultural issues
• Possible different population than what is served in traditional counseling settings
  • Minorities, immigrants, low SES, children

Implications
• The type of competencies required for IHC settings may vary depending on:
  - the type of agency (e.g., primary care, oncology, HIV clinics),
  - the agency’s philosophy, and
  - various staff needs (Aitken & Curtis, 2004).
• Supervisors will need to be knowledgeable about their supervisees’ specific IHC setting in an effort to provide appropriate education, consultation, or evaluation depending on the need and development of their supervisees (Nelson, Johnson, & Thorngren, 2000).
• Skilled in brief behavioral health consultation practices and assessments
• PCPs will need to know about the limits, breadth, and depth of a counselor’s skills and practices (Aitken & Curtis, 2004).
  • Supervisors can aid in this cross-disciplinary training.

References
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