Health Educators Trained on Behavioral Screening and Intervention Services

**Description:** This project aimed to develop a curriculum for training community health educators to provide evidence-based, cost-saving Behavioral Screening and Intervention (BSI) services across Wisconsin, and eventually the country. With faculty from UW-La Crosse, a BSI curriculum was developed, implemented and prepared for dissemination.

**Relevance:** Unhealthy behaviors, including excessive alcohol consumption and illicit drug and tobacco use, cause more than 40 percent of deaths and 75 percent of chronic disease in the United States. They also generate more than $600 billion in costs per year. Undiagnosed and untreated cases of depression add another $82 billion per year in costs as well as incalculable personal harm and social loss.

BSI strategies involve screening patients for risky behaviors followed by evidence-based interventions or referrals to experts, if necessary. BSI services can drastically reduce unhealthy behavior and lessen the associated social, economic and personal burdens. Support for incorporating BSI services into standard medical practice is growing; however, medical and health education providers often are not equipped to provide them.

**Results:** Several UW-La Crosse faculty members were recruited and involved in developing and offering a new BSI services course to students in community or public health programs. Students in the course were required to put the skills and knowledge into practice through a preceptorship. Feedback from students in the first session was used to re-evaluate and modify the curriculum before the next session. Students reported high satisfaction levels and believed the skills they learned would help them in their careers.

A motivational interviewing course based on this project’s outcomes will be included in the Community Health Education program at UW-La Crosse. A two-credit introductory course on the principles and practices of motivational interviewing also will be offered nationwide through UW-La Crosse’s Office of Continuing Education and Extension in 2016.


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