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Education Research

Poster Title
The Mental Health Disability Evaluation

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Abstract

Disability awards due to mental illness have shown a substantial rise in recent decades. The percentage of adults receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of a mental disorders rose from 24.1% in 1987 to 35.9% in 2005. Since the Disability Benefits Reform Act in 1984, the number of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) awards for mental health claims rose from 2% of new awards to 30% of all beneficiaries. Many individuals with chronic mental health issues seek treatment in community mental health centers and are evaluated and treated by psychiatric residents. In 2008, Christopher et al. conducted a survey of third- and fourth-year psychiatric residents demonstrating that a majority of residents received no didactics on this topic and desired more education to address their limited understanding of what constitutes a psychiatric disability and their lack of confidence in their ability to perform such assessments.

For trainees, there may be other types of feelings called up when working with patients who are applying for SSI/SSDI. In a 2012 survey of psychiatric residents, Jimenez and Thorkelson invited them to assess practices and opinions about counter-transference management and training. 95% of residents believed didactics addressing counter-transference would be "clinically beneficial" and three-fifths of them reported "very few" to none of their didactics explored this issue.

We believe that thoughtful resident instruction on these issues would help trainees maintain the treatment frame when evaluating impairments that cause disability, ultimately serving the best interests of both the physicians and their patients. Thus, we created an innovative and interactive educational module aimed at improving trainees' comfort with and ability to perform mental health disability evaluations, while achieving certain relevant ACGME Psychiatry Milestones (MK4, MK6, SBP4 and PBL11), and subsequently assessed the module's effectiveness.

References

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