Primary care practitioners encounter patients with mental health problems such as substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and dementia, as well as patients and families in crisis, suicide prevention, families in crisis, mood disorders, bipolar disorder, ADHD, autism, personality disorders, schizophrenia, and psychosis. Although many of these conditions need specialist care, the fact is that even if they are receiving that care they will present in primary care clinics. Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (NP) programs could add more specificity to our assessment and treatment of mental health issues in primary care settings.

Background
More than 50% of adult patients with depression were diagnosed and managed by primary care providers (Scandis and Watt (2013). More than 50% of adult patients with depression were diagnosed and managed by primary care providers (Scandis and Watt, 2013). In the United States, between 76% and 85% of mental health provision is widespread all over the world. It has also been estimated that less than 60 percent of adults with mental illness in the United States receive treatment, and psychiatric disorders are not in the same situation.”

It has also been estimated that less than 60 percent of adults with significant mental illness in the United States receive treatment, and two-thirds of adults with mental illnesses did not seek in-person therapy appointments due to the perceived stigma (NSDUH, 2013).


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References

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Conclusion and Discussion
Skills in mental health assessment and diagnosis are necessary in order to safely treat and refer the primary care patient with mental health issues. Many primary care nurse practitioner education programs do not include a separate course to address the diagnosis and treatment of common mental health disorders in depth, as well as how to handle patients and families in crisis. Primary care clinicians must be prepared to assess, treat, and refer patients for appropriate services. The addition of the current The Assessment and Diagnosis of Psychiatric and Mental Health Conditions course to the plan of study for primary care APNs has been successful in helping to prepare primary care NP students for some of the common mental health conditions they will encounter in the primary care setting.