



## Total Health Screening for Integrated Care

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### Executive Statement

Now spanning China, India, Iran and Romania, the Total Health Screening for Integrated Care project assists policy makers and health care providers in understanding the importance of mental health as an essential component to total health through mental health screening in the primary care setting. Specifically, the project demonstrates the feasibility of implementing mental health screening by primary care providers to determine the rate of mental health comorbidity in ambulatory clinics.

Total health refers to the integration of primary care mental health and public health. The project applies this concept to enhance the total health of individuals and populations through the utilization of mental health screening tools.

#### Problem

Non-communicable diseases, including mental disorders, often exist comorbid with one another and lead in the global burden of disease and disability

#### Recommendations

1. Integrate mental health care and prevention into primary care
2. Approach patient care in through a collaborative fashion process by using screening tools for mental disorders in primary health care
3. Implement routine Total Health Screening for Integrated Care to integrate primary care mental health and public health through mental health screening tools.

### Introduction

There is no health without mental health, and yet mental health care is often isolated from primary health care. Around the world, more than 500 million individuals suffer from mental disorders. Shame, stigma, discrimination and lack of access to care and resources contribute to people neglecting to seek the care and treatment they need. Mental disorders alone represent 14% of the global burden of disease (GBD) and 30-45% of the global burden of disability affecting hundreds of millions of people worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

By 2030, it is estimated the global cost of mental disorders will reach US\$6.0 trillion, a 240% increase from 2010. The lost economic output to depression alone was estimated to have cost at least \$800 billion in 2010, a sum expected to double by 2030.

Mental illnesses and other non-communicable diseases (NCD), especially cardiovascular disease (CVD) and diabetes, often co-occur. One of the most prevalent NCDs, depression, is a leading condition of the GBD and of disability and is frequently misdiagnosed, underdiagnosed and undertreated. Therefore, it is important to screen patients for mental diseases, including co-morbidities, during their first point of contact with the healthcare system and periodically thereafter.



### About the Innovation

The first simultaneous study of *Depression and Comorbidity in Primary Care* in China, India, Iran and Romania sought to screen patients for depression at primary care centers using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

instrument, a reliable, internationally validated questionnaire that can be quickly administered by non-clinical personnel.<sup>2-6</sup>

The results from the four parallel studies found similar results indicating that up to one in four primary care patients may be either at risk or are suffering from major depression. The studies also confirm high levels of comorbidity with other NCDs, especially CVD and diabetes. These findings hold important implications for individuals' and populations' total health, health systems performance, and for the delivery of care, health promotion, protection, and illness prevention.

Total Health Screening for Integrated Care improves access, quality, and sustainability of care by being one of the first means of assessment. This innovation also seeks to improve access and reduce barriers to care by advancing the screening for important mental health conditions to an earlier stage – the primary care visit. Although currently screening was limited to depression, future endeavors will include other common mental health comorbidities such as anxiety and post-traumatic stress. The project seeks to reduce shame, stigma, and discrimination often associated with mental health care. Ultimately, the ability to diagnose and treat individuals suffering from comorbid conditions, increases one's ability to live a fulfilling and productive life and contribute to low-, middle-, and high-income economies.<sup>7</sup>



## **Impact**

Total Health Screening for Integrated Care connects previously isolated approaches to health promotion – breaking down barriers and providing both policy-makers and the health team with useful information. Success can be measured by an increase in treatment in a collaborative way and identifying prevalence of comorbid conditions.<sup>8-9</sup> Until now the presence of comorbid mental health conditions in individual patients, or the prevalence in the populations surveyed was unknown. Through a free screening tool and minimal initial and follow-up training the prevalence was determined and health teams uncovered an important source of persistent impairment in 14-25% of populations studied. This knowledge thus empowered the health team to either address this additional issue in the primary care setting or refer to specialty care as needed.

## **Recommendations**

### **Integrate primary care, mental health care, and public health**

Primary care, mental health, and public health are three overlapping foci that have previously been considered as separate entities by clinicians and policy makers. The fact that mental health is part of total health and that public health seeks to improve the well-being of population; integration of all three of these aspects will lead to a stronger and more efficient healthcare delivery system. Total Health Screening for Integrated Care demonstrated that primary care screening for mental health comorbidity led to improved care on the individual level by detecting a source of disability that may not have been diagnose otherwise. In aggregate, these screenings demonstrated an impact upon to 25% of some populations – a previously unquantified but significant public health concern.

### **Approach patient care in through a collaborative fashion process by using screening tools for mental disorders in primary health care**

Screening tools are available for free and primary care clinicians can be taught to administer and interpret these instruments with minimal initial and follow-up instruction. This information allows providers to determine comorbid mental health conditions which compound the burden of other illnesses. Screening also allows for the determination of the prevalence of illness on the population level. This information can used to inform domestic and social policy priorities. Treatment of mental health comorbidities can reduce the disease and economic burden of continued impairment. In the OECD this burden is estimated to be as high as \$4 billion per year.<sup>8</sup>

### **Implement routine Total Health Screening to integrate primary care mental health and public health through mental health screening tools**

Administering appropriate screening instruments to patients with non-communicable diseases is a quick and cost-effective way to screen for depression and other mental disorders. Depression is often a comorbid condition linked with CVD and Diabetes. Screenings tests, such as the PHQ-9, can be widely used in primary care settings.

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