

Healing For Life
Tape Date –
Air Date –
Patient safety
196 Word Count

This is Dr. Linda Leckman with Medicine Today.

On May 31, forty people from around the country gathered on the 16th floor of Intermountain Healthcare's headquarters in downtown Salt Lake City. They met to discuss an Intermountain program that is attracting national attention.

The program addresses depression. It matches the severity of the patient's depression to the most efficient health care provider. The more severe the depression, the more highly trained is the care provider. Each patient is also carefully monitored by a case manager to assure all needed treatment is received.

Studies show that this approach, which was pioneered at Intermountain, improves patient satisfaction and health, while cutting costs. This means quality is improved while costs are reduced.

The program's success brought numerous leaders in the mental health profession to Salt Lake. There were leaders from the federal government's mental health agencies, as well as from other interested parties. Representatives from so many national organizations coming to a Utah meeting is unusual. They came because the Intermountain model has the potential to be applied to Medicare and Medicaid populations across the country. Meeting participants agreed this model holds considerable promise. Intermountain's approach to depression treatment may eventually be adopted on a national level.

I'm Dr. Linda Leckman with Intermountain Healthcare, and this has been Medicine Today on KSL News Radio.

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In most businesses, improved quality means higher costs. At Intermountain Healthcare, we've created a clinical initiative that improved the healthcare of those suffering from depression, while lowering the costs of treating them.

The Intermountain Mental Health Integration program brings the most current treatment knowledge to the service of every patient. It works on a triage basis. The patient is first examined by a primary care provider, such as a family practice doctor or internist who has been specially trained to evaluate those with depression.

Those with mild depression are treated by the primary care provider. Those with moderate depression come under the care of a mental health specialist. And those with severe depression are treated by a mental health specialist as well as inpatient or emergency medical services if needed. Treatment is followed up by a care manager to assure every patient receives the treatment needed. We match the severity of depression to the most efficient and effective health care provider.

We've compared this triage model to traditional treatment. The results: patient satisfaction increased, the patients' functional health improved and costs declined 5 to 10 percent. When healthcare is well managed, it really is possible to improve care and lower costs.

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Recently, Jean Bigelow's 85 year old dad dropped off a prescription, only to pick it up later and find it had the wrong person's name on it. Mistakes happen, even though healthcare providers work hard to not make any. Jean knows this as well as anyone. She oversees patient safety programs at LDS Hospital.

March 4 through 10th is National Patient Safety Awareness Week, which focuses on educating patients to become more involved with their own healthcare. Jean says those who ask their healthcare providers questions, who become active members of their healthcare team, can benefit with better healthcare outcomes.

Do not be intimidated because someone is a healthcare professional. Information is powerful and helps give you control over your situation, says Jean. If you do not understand a caregiver's answer, ask for an explanation.

Keep a list with you of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies you take. If you happen to be in an accident, those treating you will need to know this information. At home, dispose of all expired medications.

Patient safety is the responsibility of both patients and caregivers. National Patient Safety Awareness Week is a good time to start taking better control of your healthcare.

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