MONTANA: Montana Team Recommends Hospitals Add Depression Screening to Patient Questionnaires

January 20, 2017
News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark News
State: Montana

Billings Gazette [1]

Mental health officials in Montana have recommended that health care providers screen patients for depression and suicide risk. In its 2016 annual report, the Montana Suicide Mortality Review Team advised the state legislature to mandate suicide prevention and risk assessment training for all primary care physicians. Due to the state’s limited access to specialized behavioral health services, primary care settings may provide the best opportunity to identify and assist those at risk. "Primary care is the point of contact for most people because we don't have the mental health resources to adequately meet the need," said state Suicide Prevention Coordinator Karl Rosston. Some health care facilities have already begun to implement depression and suicide risk screening, such as St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings, which requires all emergency department patients to answer a set of mental health-related questions as a part of its larger triage and intake questionnaire. According to Rosston, screening for mental health issues should be a regular part of patient care in much the same way that physical health conditions are currently checked. "We're advocating for depression screening to really be the next vital sign," he said.

Spark Extra! Learn more about suicide screening and assessment [2].

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