Overview

As team-based models become a cornerstone of effective primary care delivery, healthcare professionals from diverse fields need clinical training that prepares them to work in collaborative, interdisciplinary teams. To that end, VA supports the development of innovative tools for workplace-based learning in Inter-Professional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP). This initiative collaborates with VA’s Office of Academic Affiliation and its Centers of Excellence in Primary Care Education (CoEPCEs) to perform comprehensive evaluation of IPECP innovations and their dissemination, implementation, and sustainment. Focused primarily on outcomes and efforts within the seven CoEPCEs, the evaluation also looks to the larger context of dissemination and transformation within all VA primary care clinics that provide ongoing training of health professionals.

The goal of the Action-Oriented Evaluation of Inter-Professional Learning Efforts in the CoEPCE and IA-PACT Environments Partnered Evaluation Initiative is to provide rapid insights into the characteristics of learning tools and configurations of clinic dynamics that best promote sustained and widespread use of effective learning techniques. The Initiative is also identifying outcomes of IPECP for Veteran patients, VA employees, and program graduates. Specific aims include:

1. Use a collaborative realist evaluation approach to:
   - Understand the mechanisms that drive the delivery of core IPECP content;
   - Assess quality and cost outcomes associated with product use;
   - Examine dissemination by CoEPCEs, and implementation of products by other VA users; and
   - Evaluate interactions between IPECP innovations and different outcomes of interest.

2. Guided by action evaluation principles, identify the factors associated with success in either quality impacts or implementation/dissemination/sustainment, and share these findings with stakeholders to facilitate practice transformation in interprofessional academic Patient Aligned Care Teams.

3. Provide ongoing technical advice to the CoEPCEs, as needed, to develop appropriate plans for independent, site-specific evaluation projects.
Early quantitative results from the Initiative’s evaluation suggest a positive impact in CoEPCE clinics on increasing “warm handoffs” for patients needing mental health appointments, as well as improved diabetes control measures. These findings, coupled with the Initiative’s qualitative data from interviewing and observing CoEPCE faculty, trainees, and PACT team members, identify promising practices for effective integration of mental health and pharmacy team members into ongoing patient care. Interviews with Veterans receiving care in CoEPCE clinics have identified unique perceived benefits associated with an interdisciplinary learner team, as well as patient-centered strategies for avoiding potential negatives resulting from changes in care team members.

**Implementation Strategy**

The action-oriented philosophy of this project involves the CoEPCEs in the ongoing and iterative development of evaluation questions, as well as the analysis of data collected. CoEPCE partners have been involved in designing employee surveys, identifying administrative data outcomes of interest, and contributing to the analysis of qualitative data in a cross-site context. This allows insights from evaluation to continuously inform the development of new curricular innovations, especially among newer CoEPCE sites adopting tools from existing sites. As CoEPCE innovations are disseminated to a larger audience, the Initiative will collect data on different dissemination pathways (i.e., online learning, one-on-one coaching) used by the CoEPCEs to evaluate their effectiveness, providing analysis back to the sites so they can tailor and streamline their dissemination strategies to better meet the needs of new users of their innovations.

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**Operational Partner**
The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) fulfills one of VA’s four statutory missions: “to educate for VA and for the Nation.” Partnerships with U.S. academic institutions allow VA to spread knowledge that enhances healthcare for Veterans, in addition to constantly adapting curricula as the American healthcare system evolves. The OAA has assisted in the education of hundreds of thousands of clinicians and strives to collaborate with academic institutions to create environments that enhance the health and care of Veterans.

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**For More Information**
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