Overview

Gaps in delivery of gender-sensitive comprehensive care have resulted in disparities in the care experienced among women Veterans receiving VA healthcare. VA policy action providing guidance on delivery of comprehensive healthcare services for women Veterans (VHA Handbook 1330.01) was disseminated nationally in 2010, followed by annual assessments of progress and site visits evaluating local efforts. While substantial inroads have been made, policy implementation, even when championed by women's health leaders in the field, has not been uniformly successful in achieving delivery of comprehensive care by designated providers in gender-sensitive environments that ensure women's privacy, dignity and safety—all tenets of the original guidance and updated VHA Directive (2017).

In collaboration with VA Women's Health Services (WHS), VA HSR&D investigators developed a series of studies to better understand and help improve comprehensive care implementation through the Women Veterans' Healthcare CREATE Initiative. Among these, one focused on testing an evidence-based quality improvement (EBQI) approach to tailoring VA's Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) to the needs of women Veterans, which has yielded significant local improvements in women Veterans' care. The Evaluating Evidence-Based Quality Improvement of Comprehensive Women's Healthcare in Low-Performing VA Facilities QUERI emphasizes a multilevel partnered approach to building capacity for innovation and implementation, as well as the spread of evidence-based practice. With its demonstrated success in the CREATE PACT study and several other VA studies, WHS became interested in using EBQI to help improve comprehensive women's healthcare at low-performing VA facilities.
Objectives

This QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative’s objectives include the following:

- Evaluate both barriers and facilitators to achieving delivery of comprehensive women’s healthcare in the identified low-performing VA facilities.
- Examine the effectiveness of EBQI in supporting low-performing VA facilities achieve improved:
  1) Organizational features (i.e., level of available comprehensive services, care coordination arrangements, number of PACT features, and improvements in the environment of care);
  2) Provider/staff attitudes (i.e., improved gender awareness, women health’s knowledge and practice); and
  3) Quality of care and patient experience among women Veteran patients.
- Assess contextual factors, local implementation processes, and organizational changes in the participating facilities over time.

Implementation Strategy

Results from this evaluation will be used to provide feedback to stakeholders at the local, network and national levels, while also being used to continuously refine EBQI implementation strategy. The evaluation also will help inform optimal strategies for ongoing improvements in women Veterans’ care in other VA facilities and for other improvement initiatives in this and other program offices.

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Operational Partner

VA Women’s Health Services, in the Office of Patient Care Services, addresses the healthcare needs of women Veterans and works to ensure that timely, equitable, high-quality, comprehensive healthcare services are provided in a sensitive and safe environment at VA healthcare facilities nationwide. They strive to be a national leader in the provision of healthcare for women, thereby raising the standard of care for all women.

For More Information

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