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AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
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GOOD PRACTICE

Tools and Information for Professional Psychologists

SPECIAL ISSUE – ALTERNATIVE PRACTICE MODELS



Alternative Practice Models for Psychologists: An Overview

Choosing the Best Legal Structure for Your Professional Practice

Considering Options for Alternative Practice Models

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

A Two-Generational Approach to Integrated Care

Putting Your Business Plan to Work

Alternative Practice Models – Brief Glossary

PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE

Maintaining a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

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Co-location offers several advantages for patients as well as health care professionals. One is the reduced time a psychologist presumably needs to spend cultivating referrals. In addition, co-location makes it easier and more convenient for a patient to follow up on referrals. For example, when making a referral for behavioral health services, a primary care physician may be able to provide a “warm hand-off” by walking down the hall and introducing the patient to the psychologist.

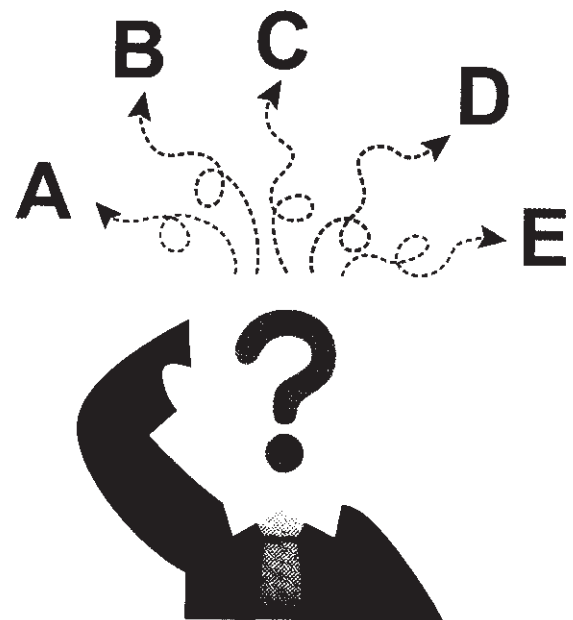
Successful co-location can reduce the stigma often associated with traditional outpatient mental health. If a patient already has a comfortable and trusting relationship with the referring provider, the patient may be more positively inclined toward seeing the co-located psychologist. Taken together, these advantages make it more likely that a patient will follow through on referrals and receive more efficient and collaborative care.

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→ Comprehensive MedPsych Systems, founded by Dr. Geoffrey Kanter in 1998, is an example of a behavioral health practice with an extensive referral system that includes co-location. It is currently the largest private behavioral health group in Florida, with more than 45 staff members (including psychologists, neuropsychologists, postdoctoral neuropsychology residents, social workers, counselors and psychiatrists) and 15 offices, several of which are co-located with other health care professionals. Dr. Kanter’s group contracts or provides services in a variety of settings in addition to its outpatient mental health offices, including memory clinics, hospital-based rehab programs, acute care hospitals, inpatient psychiatric hospital programs, sports training facilities, university-based counseling programs, primary and secondary schools, medical schools, holistic treatment centers and substance abuse programs. More than 450 referral sources send patients to Comprehensive MedPsych services each year. Additional information about Dr. Kanter and his provider group is available at www.medpsych.net.

Independent practice associations

An independent practice association (IPA) is a legal entity wherein independent psychological practices can come together to work toward common goals, such as



contracting with a managed care company, accountable care organization (ACO, discussed later in this article) or health system. IPAs allow professionals to maintain a high degree of autonomy while benefiting from the greater resources and bargaining power of being part of a larger group. The IPA model is common among physicians and is an emerging practice model for psychologists.

IPAs are a relatively low-risk way to join with a larger group of psychologists and to negotiate contracts with insurers. However, in order to become part of an IPA, members must sign a “participating provider” contract. Before signing, psychologists should carefully review the terms of the agreement and consult with a knowledgeable attorney regarding potential benefits and risks, including antitrust considerations (see sidebar on p. 11).

Antitrust law is complex, but the key issue is that collaborations of independent health care professionals conducting joint fee negotiations must demonstrate sufficient financial or clinical integration to satisfy antitrust law enforcement agencies. For additional information about the implications of antitrust law for psychologists seeking to implement new practice models, please see “Avoiding Antitrust Problems” (*Good Practice* Spring/Summer 2014, p. 8).

Dr. Peter Oppenheimer, a founding partner of Feil & Oppenheimer Psychological Services and President of the Rhode Island Psychological Association, is working to promote integrated care in his state. Since 2010 Dr. Oppenheimer’s practice and other practices in Rhode Island have partnered with the Rhode Island Primary Care