

Improving the Quality of Treatment Adherence Sessions

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Introduction

- Issan House is Greyston Health Services' 35-unit supportive housing facility, located in Southwest Yonkers, for formerly homeless PLWHA.
- 97% of clients are also diagnosed with severe, persistent mental illness and abuse substances. Issan House is the only facility of its kind in Westchester County.
- As of 7/1/2016, Issan House had 33 clients. The staff includes 2.5 Ryan White-funded case managers.
- Treatment adherence sessions are an important tool that case managers have to help clients achieve HIV viral suppression.
- A comparison between client reported adherence rates and viral suppression data suggests that clients are not always comfortable telling the full truth about their adherence to antiretroviral medications (ARVs).
- Without knowing more details about clients' barriers to 100% adherence, case managers frequently miss opportunities to improve viral load suppression and their clients' overall health.

AIM

- By improving the quality of adherence assessments, Issan House case managers will improve client adherence to ARVs and increase rates of HIV viral suppression.

Methods

- In order to improve the quality of the adherence assessment sessions, case management staff expanded the required adherence assessment form to include questions that create a personal conversation *with* their client about HIV medication and treatment.
- In implementing the new form the case managers were encouraged to create a comfortable, non-judgmental environment that would allow clients to be more forthcoming about their medication adherence.

Expanded Questions

- Do you experience side effects that make you want to avoid medication?
- Do you avoid medication while using other illicit substances?
- Does your mood effect your likeliness to take your medication?
- Are you likely to run out of your medication before you remember to pick up your prescription?
- Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of pills you are currently prescribed?
- Are you likely to stop taking medication when your numbers are elevated?
- Could a pill box be useful in helping you to remember to take your medication?

Results

- The implementation of these additional treatment adherence questions has increased the depth of the discussion case managers have with their clients about taking antiretroviral medications.
- The conversations allow the clients to develop insight into why they may be missing doses and provide the basis for developing individual improvement strategies.
- The case managers find they are spending more time with clients on the treatment adherence assessment, and because of this, better understand the barriers to adherence clients face.
- The more conversational approach puts many clients at ease and increases the sense of trust between client and case manager, allowing for more candid responses.



Case Managers Speak:

Clients are more likely to admit to missed doses after the conversations. They often feel guilty for missing doses for reasons beyond their control

Shanese

Some people admit to taking cocktail holidays. When people open up, I am able to dispel myths

Arthur

The new questions make clients think before answering about how they are taking their meds

Ariel

Conclusions

- Transforming the treatment adherence assessment session from the rote checking of boxes to a more in-depth conversation builds trust and rapport between case managers and clients.
- While this method still depends on client self-report and may not improve the accuracy of the self-reported data for all clients, it improves the overall quality of the treatment adherence assessment experience.
- More in-depth information about how clients feel about HIV treatment and their day to day experience taking medications provides key ways to improve ARV adherence and viral suppression.