Introduction

Mental illness is the number one cause of disability in the United States, touching the lives of roughly 20 percent of Americans. It is estimated that fewer than 40 percent of people in need of mental health services are getting care they need. Approximately, 11 million Americans have inadequate care. The Affordable Care Health Act (2010) includes mental health care by emphasizing and promoting initiatives and opportunities for advance graduate level practice nurses.

MCPHS University implemented a new online* psychiatric nurse practitioner program in May 2016 that is responsive to

- Lack of access to mental health services and timely referrals for patients in need of mental health services.
- Documented disparity and utilization of primary health care providers for the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders.
- Burden of mental illness and addictions to the health care providers who lack specialized competency in the care of this population.
- Increase of mental illness and substance abuse visits to community health clinics which are often understaffed by qualified mental health care providers.
- Complexity of underserved, low income, underinsured, stigmatized patients.
- Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) The Future of Nursing, Leading Change and Advancing Health.

Program Objectives

The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Graduate will demonstrate:

- Knowledge base that is sound with foundational skill in providing primary mental health care to individuals and families across the lifespan in a variety of settings.
- Skills necessary for the promotion of optimal mental health, prevention, and treatment of psychiatric disorders and health maintenance across the lifespan.
- Insight and understanding of the role of the advanced practice nurse, and the professional and political issues related to the role.
- Recognize and understand the scope of advanced practice nurse as a family mental health primary care provider; and
- Recognize the responsibility of the advanced practice role, and to practice within an interprofessional healthcare team.

Areas of Need

Mental Health Disorders in Children and Adolescents

- 20% of youth ages 12-18 live with a mental health condition.
- One-fourth of all chronic health conditions in children and adolescents are mental health conditions.
- 12% of youth have a major depressive disorder.
- 8% of youth have an anxiety disorder.
- 10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder.
- 1% of youth have autism disorder.

Mental Health Disorders of Adults

- Approximately 60 million Americans have experienced a mental illness in a given year.
- One-fourth of all chronic health conditions in adults are mental health conditions. Depression is the second leading cause of disability worldwide behind cardiovascular disease.
- 20% of adults have a mental health condition. This number increases to 25% if selecting mental illness in the last year.
- 50% of those who die by suicide had a treatable mental illness in the last year.
- 10% of youth a behavior or conduct disorder.
- 43.8 Million Veterans use mental health services by 2016.
- U.S. Surgeon General’s Call to Action for the mental health of adults:

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (PMHNP) being knowledgeable and skill in the areas of mental health to primary care. Mental health care is one of the essential health benefits that must be provided under Affordable Health Care Act (2010). The addition of the PMHNP specialty track at MCPHS University builds upon the existing, successful Family Nurse Practitioner core curriculum program and provides a timely and resourceful response to mental health care needs. MCPHS central location, flexible online class schedules and established networks of preceptors and healthcare agencies will conveniently accommodate practicing nurses to engage with the program while maintaining their RN employment. At the center of the Graduate Nursing Program is an active, collaborative relationship between the school and community based mental health programs, state hospitals and current practitioners within the mental health field. Entry into the program is for students who:

- Accepted into and complete the ‘Bridge program’ with comparable to BSN curriculum; and then matriculate into the PMHNP program (BSN not awarded).
- Holds a BSN degree with working experience in the areas of mental health.
- Holds a masters degree in nursing and matriculate into the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS).

Program Curriculum

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners can meet the mental health needs of patients in the following settings:

- Community Mental Health Centers (urban and rural)
- Correctional Facilities
- Domestic Violence Shelters
- Home Health Agencies
- In-patient Psychiatric Facilities
- Primary Psychiatric Practices Psychopharmacology Clinic
- Psychiatric Consult Services
- Residential Substance Abuse Facilities Schools
- State Psychiatric Facilities
- Urban Nurse-Managed Clinic
- Veterans Administration Psychiatric Facilities

References

*Online learning has dramatically increased over the past few years and has become a strategy and integral part of higher education institutions. The flexibility and convenience of online learning is essential for working nurses with varying schedules who enroll in master programs.