

## Join Project ECHO: Be Part of Mental Health Integration in Your Community

Often, primary care clinicians are concerned with the next steps after screening patients for depression and alcohol use disorder. Specialty services for these conditions are generally difficult to access in rural areas, and many patients are hesitant to seek care. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) 2016 Quality Strategy includes an objective to improve behavioral health access and quality care. In support of this objective, CMS awarded a two-year contract to the TMF Quality Innovation Network Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO), which is led by TMF Health Quality Institute in Texas and Oklahoma, in partnership with the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care and Primaris in Missouri.

This initiative focuses on treatment of depression and alcohol use disorder and the integration of behavioral health into primary care through Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) and the Mental Health Integration model.

Project ECHO is the perfect opportunity to reach rural primary care clinicians, and the TMF QIN-QIO Project ECHO initiative has partnered with the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin to provide behavioral health subject-matter experts who will mentor clinicians and give feedback on patient cases. The subject-matter experts are Garrett Key, MD, assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry; William Lawson, MD, PhD, DFAPA, associate dean, Health Disparities; Tawny Smith, PharmD, BCPP, assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry; and Stephen Strakowski, MD, chair, Department of Psychiatry.

Participating clinicians will gain expertise treating patients with depression and alcohol use disorder, improve patient satisfaction and reduce harm by implementing best practices to increase response rates and reduce emergency department use.

The final cohort begins Jan. 10, 2017, and will last 12 weeks (Wednesdays, noon–1 p.m. CT), in which time clinicians will present patient case studies to the Project ECHO team via webcam for feedback. Topics of discussion include patient health questionnaires, depression and depression interventions, antidepressant algorithms, suicide, harm reduction, substance use disorder (SUD) and SUD interventions.

**Physicians in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas are encouraged to join.** To learn more about joining this initiative, please contact Caitlin Fenerty, MPH, project director, at [Caitlin.Fenerty@area-b.hcqis.org](mailto:Caitlin.Fenerty@area-b.hcqis.org).