

Zucker Hillside Hospital Successfully Integrates Primary Care

Starting this past June, as part of DSRIP project 3.a.i (Integration of primary care and behavioral health services), Northwell Health's Zucker Hillside Hospital, began to incorporate primary care services into outpatient behavioral health appointments, allowing behavioral health patients to receive primary care during their behavioral health appointment.

For a total of 21 hours per week, a primary care physician and nurse practitioner provide patients with annual physicals, preventive screenings, and vaccinations. These primary care providers are on the same electronic medical record system as the hospital's behavioral health practitioners, allowing for a coordinated approach to care for patients. Also, behavioral health practitioners provide warm handoffs to primary care providers, helping to increase the level of comfort patients have with the primary care provider.

"We found that behavioral health patients can be reluctant to seek primary care services because of symptoms related to their behavioral health condition(s), including not feeling comfortable in waiting rooms, not being able to get to primary care appointments, and stigmas associated with behavioral health conditions," said Rajvee Vora, MD, MS, Director, Ambulatory Behavioral Health for DSRIP Implementation, Northwell Health Solutions. "By integrating 21 hours of primary care services into behavioral health appointments, we relieve many of these deterrents and are able to provide the community with necessary primary care."

Zucker Hillside also plans to incorporate gynecological services for women in the near future.