



2019 Annual Conference
Changing Minds, Changing Lives:
Rethinking Treatment for People Living with Serious Mental Illness

Saturday, November 2nd, 2019 in Norwood, MA

Afternoon Breakout Session
Closing the Gap: Reducing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Behavioral Health by Targeting Multiple Clinical and Policy Mechanisms (1CE)

Presented by Benjamin Cook, Ph.D., MPH
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The goal of this presentation is to increase understanding about the epidemiology and health services research demonstrating racial/ethnic disparities in behavioral health and behavioral health treatment. As the field moves from identifying disparities to developing and testing interventions to reduce these disparities, I will also present a summary of how structural racism and provider discrimination act as mechanisms underlying these disparities and examples of policy and clinical interventions that have been undertaken to address these mechanisms. Key to the success of these interventions are the development of partnerships between community stakeholders, academic institutions, and clinicians. One such partnership recently formed in the Boston area holds promise and will be discussed.

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the epidemiology and health services research demonstrating racial/ethnic disparities in behavioral health and behavioral health treatment.
2. Identify policy and clinical interventions that have been undertaken to address disparities in mental health treatment.

Benjamin Cook, Ph.D., MPH is Director of the Health Equity Research Lab at Cambridge Health Alliance, and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. He holds a Ph.D. in Health Policy from Harvard University and is a health services researcher focused on improving quality of life, and access and quality of treatment for individuals living with behavioral health disorders.

His research interests center broadly around improving healthcare equity, tracking mental health and substance use treatment disparities in the U.S., and identifying innovative interventions that improve quality of care for underserved populations. He has been Principal Investigator of multiple NIH, AHRQ, and

Foundation-funded studies, and currently leads NIH- and PCORI-funded grants related to discrimination in the healthcare setting, tobacco use among those with substance use disorder, the impact of Medicaid value-based payment initiatives and Medicare Accountable Care Organizations on behavioral health treatment disparities. He also co-leads projects assessing mental healthcare disparities among transgender individuals and evaluating criminal justice diversion programs. Dr. Cook assists with research training for Harvard Medical School psychiatry and psychology interns and fellows, and provides support to Cambridge Health Alliance clinicians interested in pursuing quantitative research studies screening, assessment, and treatment. He has provided guidance and training on suicide evaluation and treatment to psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers and administrators at hospitals around the state.