

# Many patients in urban clinics need mental health treatment

March 17 2016, by Neil Schoenherr

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The American health care system must do a better job of systematically detecting and treating mental health problems within outpatient primary care clinics, especially those that serve vulnerable populations, finds a study led by Darrell Hudson, assistant professor at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

An analysis of patients at the BJC Center for Outpatient Health (COH) in St. Louis found that nearly half of primary care patients surveyed had a diagnosed [mental health](#) problem, according to the study.

Researchers surveyed 767 patients who agreed to have data taken from their electronic medical record, which was analyzed for a history of mental health problems. They found that 45 percent had a diagnosed [mental health problem](#), the most common of which was depression.

African-Americans were more likely to have been diagnosed, as were Medicaid patients.

"The biggest take away to me is the high prevalence of [mental health conditions](#) among this population of primary care patients," Hudson said. "The data suggest that COH providers may be doing a good job of identifying mental health conditions and because the COH is a comprehensive facility with mental health specialty care within the same building, perhaps patients with mental health conditions are more likely to receive mental health care.

"Other [health care](#) organizations and facilities may uncover unmet mental health needs if they move to more integrated, coordinated models of care," he said.

The study was published in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*.

**More information:** Darrell L. Hudson et al. Estimates of Mental Health Problems in a Vulnerable Population within a Primary Care Setting, *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* (2016). [DOI: 10.1353/hpu.2016.0012](https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2016.0012)

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

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