

Implementation of Progressive Tinnitus Management: An Assessment of Readiness

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Objectives. We have developed Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM), an evidence-based program that is endorsed by VA Central Office (VACO) for use at VA medical centers (VAMCs). PTM is an interdisciplinary method requiring the clinical services of both audiologists and mental health (MH) providers. The objectives of this study are: (1) describe current tinnitus-management practices in VA Audiology and Mental Health programs across the country; (2) identify barriers and facilitators to PTM program implementation based on the experience of VA Audiology and Mental Health clinics that have fully, partially, or not implemented PTM; (3) Determine readiness of VA Audiology and Mental Health clinics, within VISN 20, to implement PTM. With this information, a full implementation study (using a Hybrid III implementation/effectiveness design) of PTM will be designed and tested at VISN 20.

Plan. Our long-term goal is to successfully implement PTM into clinical practice across VAMCs nationally. Information is needed on the potential barriers and facilitators to implementation and the readiness of sites to adopt PTM. This Rapid Response Project will develop this information and inform potential approaches to dissemination and implementation of PTM. These approaches will subsequently be tested in a Service Directed Project.

Methods. This 1-year mixed-methods study will use a three-phased design to obtain information from VA audiologists and psychologists (those most aware of tinnitus practices at their site). Specifically, we will: (Phase 1) survey clinicians at VAMCs nationwide regarding current provision of tinnitus clinical services, and implementation and sustainability of new programs such as PTM; (Phase 2) interview clinicians at VAMCs with full PTM, partial PTM, and no-PTM (based on survey results) regarding barriers and facilitators for full implementation of PTM; and (Phase 3) interview clinicians at each of 15 VISN 20 sites having an audiology clinic regarding site-specific barriers and facilitators to implementing and providing PTM, readiness to adopt PTM, and strategies for full PTM implementation.

Findings to Date. none

Relevance to VA's Mission. Tinnitus is the most prevalent service-connected (SC) disability for Veterans (971,990 Veterans SC for tinnitus in Fiscal Year 2012). Tinnitus and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are strongly related. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is committed to providing access to tinnitus services to improve patient engagement in self management and health outcomes. To support VHA's mission, the Polytrauma Blast Related Injuries (PT/BRI) Quality Enhancement Research Initiative's (QUERI's) major goals are to enhance implementation of patient-centered care, improve patient abilities to manage persistent symptoms, and optimize support systems for Veterans with TBI/ Polytrauma. VHA and the QUERI recognize the need to assess determinants of gaps in delivery of PTM and support the proposed study. This work will inform best approaches to implementation of PTM to meet the needs of all Veterans who suffer from tinnitus.