

Mental Illness in Older Adults: Factors that Impact Treatment Trajectories

Samuel Asante, MSW, Frances Wilby, PhD, Marilyn Luptak, PhD, Cherie Brunker, MD, Michael Lowry, MD

Background

Prevalence of mental health problems of older adults is often overlooked in this country. Difficulty in accessing care in the community, disparities in access and utilization of services, and individual and systemic barriers to care exist for this population.

Objectives

1. Identify individual and systemic barriers to care for older adults with mental illness
2. Describe strategies that can improve access to care in the community for older adults
3. Articulate suggested policy changes

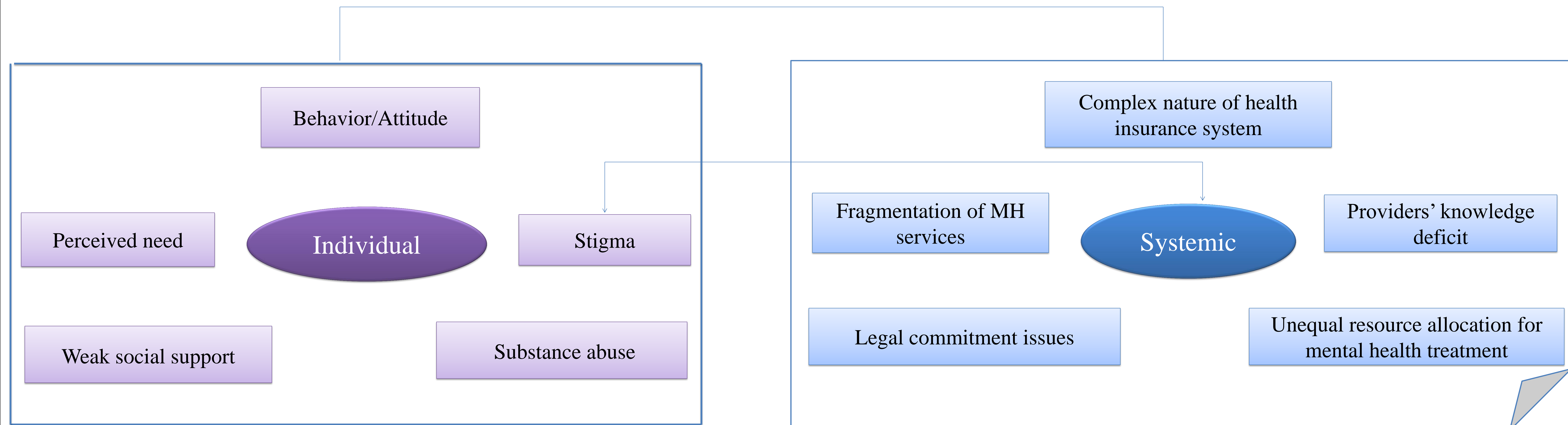
Methods

This community based participatory research study utilized providers' focus groups, record reviews, standardized instruments, and semi-structured interviews to examine the trajectory of 36 older adults discharged from two inpatient psychiatric hospitals.

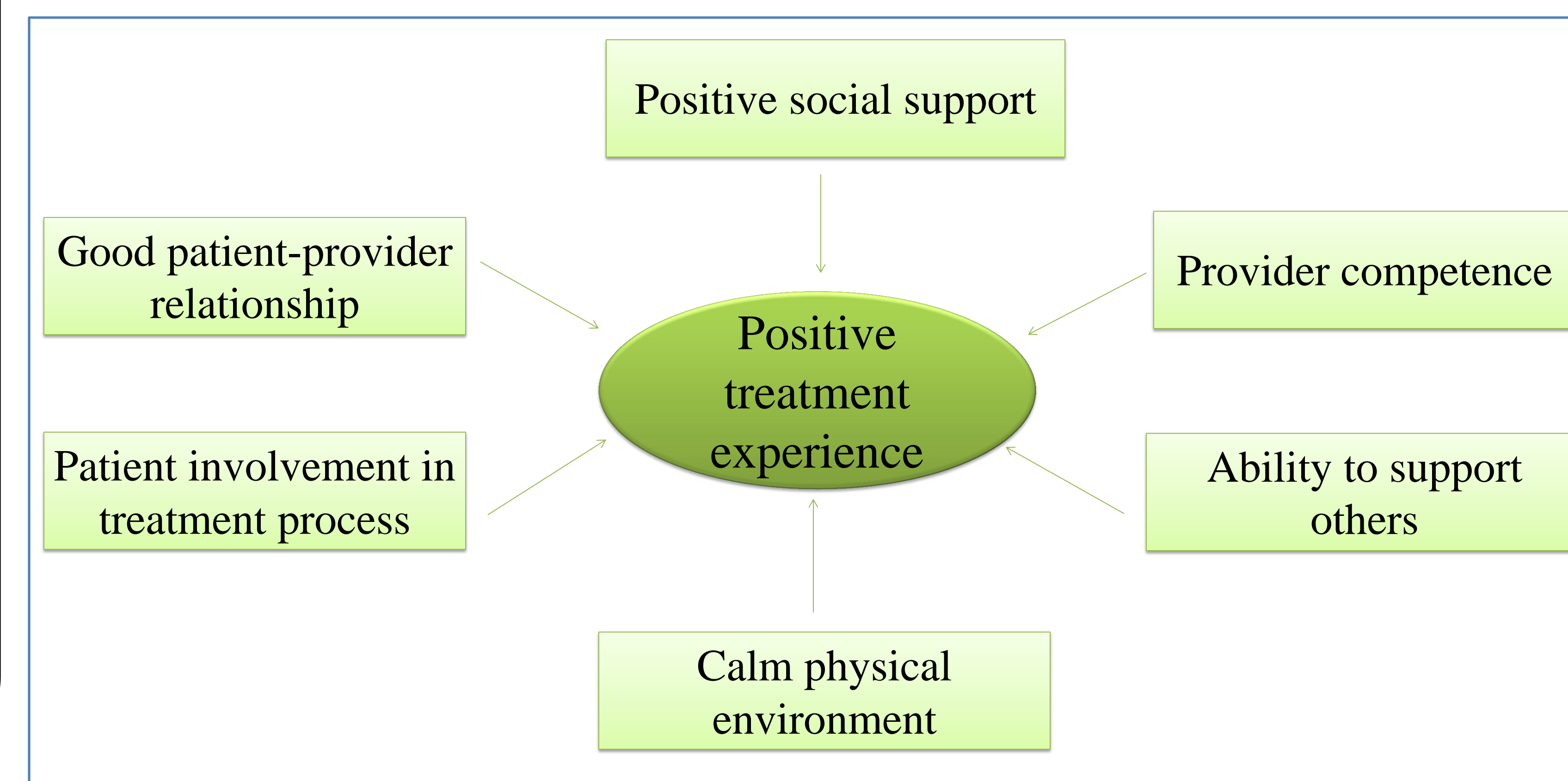
Findings

Qualitative analysis of patient interviews and provider focus group interviews suggest that quality of social support impacts both in-patient treatment outcomes and discharge outcomes. Positive social support is related to quality of insurance coverage and ability of patients to follow-through on discharge referrals. Other results point to problems with assessment and diagnosis related to inadequate physician preparation, stigma associated with mental health diagnoses, and attitudes and beliefs of older adults towards mental illness.

Providers' views – Barriers



Patients' views



Implications for Practice & Policy

- ✓ Family involvement in care
- ✓ Integrated system of care
- ✓ Importance of patient-provider relationship
- ✓ Training for providers
- ✓ Eliminate barriers in Health insurance (Medicaid/Medicare) system
- ✓ Address stigma