

**OKLAHOMA ALLIANCE ON AGING
Education Committee, September 23, 2005**

**MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES for OLDER OKLAHOMANS;
A PANEL DISCUSSION**

Present: Luann Cox (Alliance Secretary), Laurel Dinkel (Elder Counseling and Clinical Services, Alzheimer's Association), Vicki Escajeda (Case manager, Deaconess Senior Diagnostic Center), Bernice Priest-Wilcox (ASCOG Area Aging Agency Advisory Council), Kent Kepler (LPC, Girling Healthcare Advantage Case Manager). Tully McCoy (Alliance Vice President, Attorney), Beth Patterson (RSVP. Depression in Later Life), Helen Patrick (Consumer, Stephens Ministry, AARP), Linda Skinner (Geriatric Case Manager, CACM), Kathy Smith (Oklahoma Health Care Authority), Vivian S. Smith (Alliance on Aging Education Committee Chair, volunteer), Rindi Tipton (Program Director, Deaconess Mental Health Inc.), James Wilcox (ASCOG Area Aging Agency Advisory Council). Teddy Wire (Hope Community Services, Oklahoma City)

BACKGROUND

Mental health issues have long been among the priorities of the Oklahoma Alliance on Aging, affecting older adults in a variety of settings and services. including nursing homes; home health settings, retirement communities, low income senior housing, and the homeless. Alcohol addiction is a mental health problem, for many adults of all ages. Depression is a serious problem among older adults, often related to family losses. Suicide is too often a choice.

DIVERSE NEEDS & SERVICES

Rindi Tipton is the Program Director for Mental Health Services at the Senior Diagnostic Center of Deaconess Hospital on 23rd Street in Oklahoma City. Vicki Escajeda is the Case Manager. Depression may be related to diabetes, heart disease and alcohol abuse. A Medicare pilot project nationwide is studying in-home services for diabetes, heart care, depression, and dementia.

Medicaid no longer pays for mental health services in nursing home settings in Oklahoma, although the Medicare Preadmission Screening and Resident Review (PASSAR) still exists.

Laurel Dinkel is affiliated with the Alzheimer's Association and studies geriatric mental health care as it relates to Medicare and Medicaid. Caregiver training that is dementia specific is needed. Social workers and nurses are more interested than other staff.

Geriatric Day Care centers provide mental health services to some participants, but Medicare does not reimburse. Medicaid?

Psychiatrists do not treat Medicare patients for mental health conditions because billing is inadequate.

More programs are needed to train interested older people in mental health related issues. Communities should be made more elder-friendly. and include support groups for family members.

Alcoholism and drunk driving remain a problem for some people in the Advantage program, who are low income semi-nursing home eligible and live at home. Case managers should be aware of this problem.

Guardianship is an option for people who are incapable of managing their own affairs.

Doctors are over-prescribing narcotics for both the young and the old.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Rindi Tipton reported that Indians in South Carolina have excellent coordinated mental health services for older people.

Training is in community based organizations.

Vivian Smith, Ph.D.
Committee Chairman