

ABSTRACT

Depression is one of the most common mental health diagnoses and causes of disability worldwide. An estimated 6.7% of the adult population experiences a major depressive episode in the United States each year. Patients with mental illness are typically treated in the hospital or primary care settings. Clinical social workers provide a range of services in both settings. Attitudes and knowledge of pharmacological agents often lack clinical social workers. This practice improvement project was framed by the reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance framework theory and sought to design and disseminate a cost-effective and accessible 45-min online module to improve attitudes and knowledge of using psychopharmacology for treating clinical depression. A sample of 12 clinical social workers affiliated with Johns Hopkins University Hospital participated in the 45-min online learning module and completed a pre and posttest to assess change in knowledge and attitudes after exposure to the module. A *t*-test estimated that attitudes about the need for clinical social workers to be knowledgeable and beliefs about the effectiveness of psycho-pharmaceuticals in treating clinical depression were left unchanged. However, the average per item score for knowledge and competency increased by 17% and was highly significant ($t = 4.46; p = .001$). Outcomes indicate that this educational module was highly effective for filling gaps in knowledge. Online teaching modules, such as the one developed and tested for this practice improvement project, should be carefully considered for improving the management of clinically depressed patients.

Keywords: *attitudes, continuing medical education, clinical depression, clinical social work, disease management, knowledge, online training, psychopharmacology*