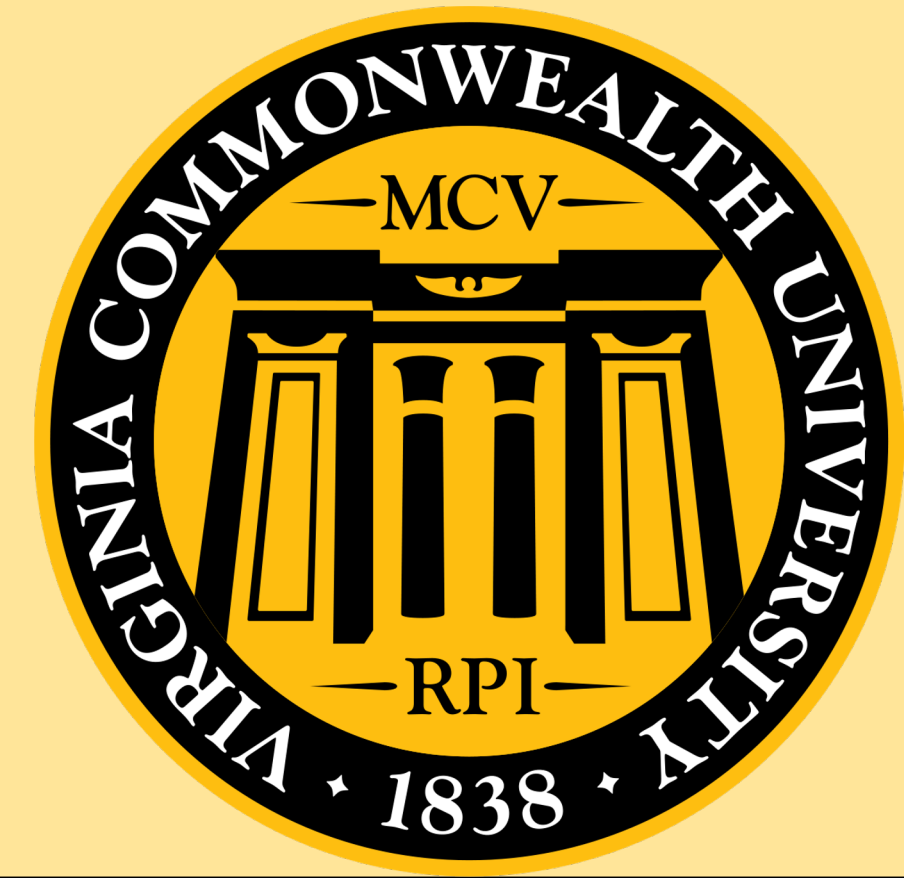


Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) during 3rd Year Psychiatry Clerkships: Development of a Pilot Program at VCU School of Medicine



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Introduction

- Psychiatry clerkships often provide few opportunities for medical students to firsthand experience and appreciate the biopsychosocial factors that influence severe mental illness (SMI).
- Assertive community treatment (ACT) is a model of community based psychiatric care that employs a multi-disciplinary team to deliver mental health services to patients with severe mental illnesses (SMI).
- Medical student participation in ACT teams appears to be a valuable but underutilized teaching tool to understand the biopsychosocial elements of psychiatric care.
- However, few medical schools offer the opportunity to participate in ACT during the core psychiatry clerkship¹.
- At the VCU School of Medicine, students created a pilot program to integrate an ACT experience into the 4-week psychiatry clerkship.



Fig 1. Chesterfield County Mental Health Services – 3rd year medical students can opt in to participate in an immersive ACT experience during their psychiatry rotation

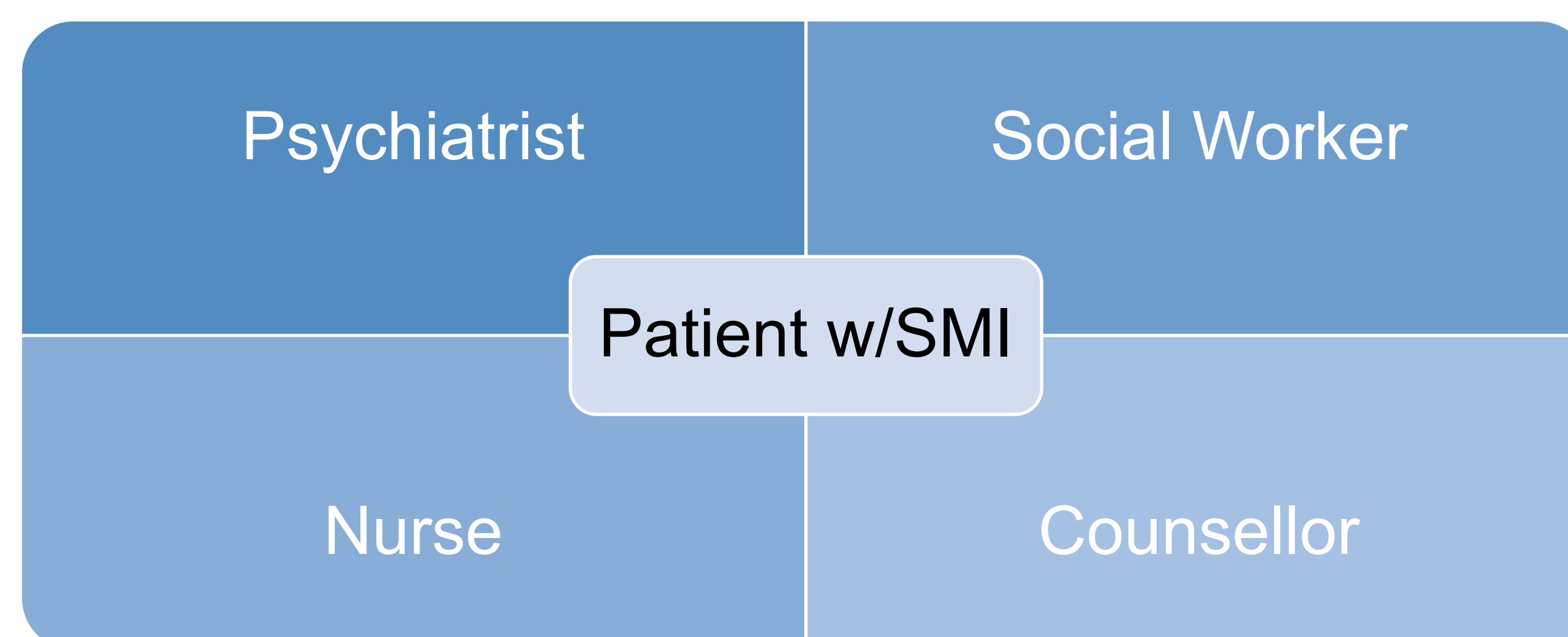


Fig 2. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) – ACT is a team of various mental health professionals united by the goal of assisting persons with SMI to live successfully within the community.

Objective

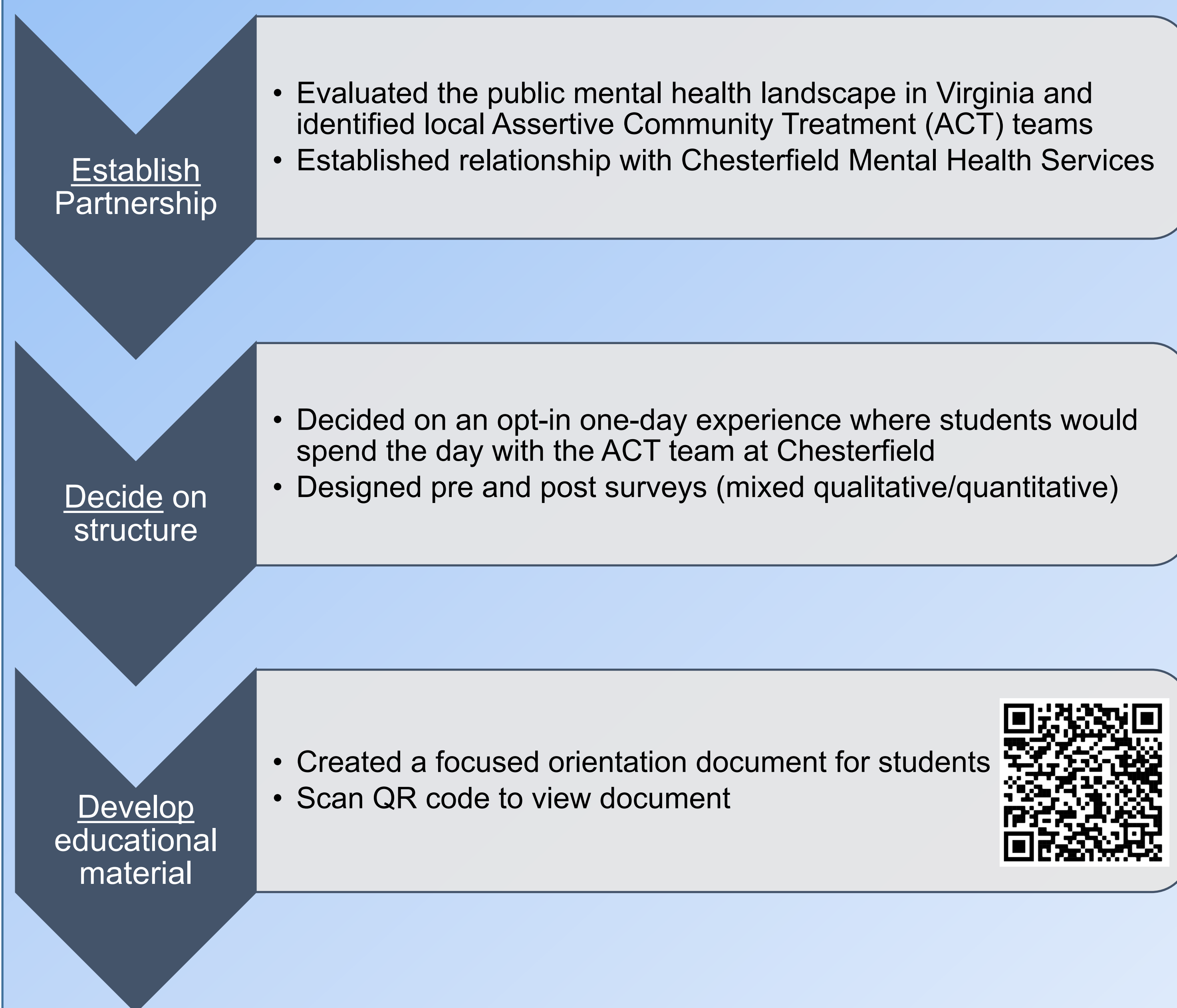
Outline the design, development, and implementation of a pilot program to integrate an ACT experience in 3rd year psychiatry clerkships.

Methods

Step 1: ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

- Involved conducting a literature review on the use of ACT as an educational tool for medical students. Key takeaways included:
 - Only one other medical school offers an ACT experience in the psychiatry clerkship
 - Qualitative reviews describe ACT as a unique learning experience.
 - ACT can broaden students' understanding of psychiatry, and clerkships significantly influence specialty choice.

Step 2: DEVELOPMENT



Step 3: IMPLEMENTATION

- Proposed pilot program at the School of Medicine's Curriculum Council meeting and received approval in April 2022. First program was implemented in May 2022.

Preliminary Results

*"I think it would be great if this could be **expanded and offered to more students** as I think it was a **really invaluable experience.**"*

*"It showed a **different side to medicine** that is neglected in medical school since so much time is spent in the hospital."*

*"Psychiatry is a very humanizing field in medicine, compared to others I have encountered....**ACT helped me realize that psychiatry really is about building relationships of trust and allowing that to also be of therapeutic benefit to patients**"*

Discussion

Psychiatry clerkships often do not provide avenues for students to analyze and evaluate the biopsychosocial factors that influence mental health. ACT teams provide a unique learning experience for students to interact with patients in their own homes, providing exposure to community psychiatry and broadening student's perception of the field of psychiatry. Thus, medical student participation in ACT teams is an undervalued learning tool for students. We hope that this research can inspire other medical institutions to integrate an ACT experience into psychiatry clerkships, and ultimately inspire more interest in a highly demanded field.

Future Directions

- Continue data collection with pre and post surveys through 2023
- Consider including a reflective component that would allow students to analyze and evaluate their experience

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References

¹Kanofsky, J. D., Woesner, M. E., Bronovitski, D., DaCosta, I., & Gellebter, M. (2019). Rare Encounters: Medical Students Give Assertive Community Treatment Team Visits Rave Reviews. *The Primary Care Companion for CNS Disorders*, 21(2), 23892.