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# PRIMARY HEALTHCARE

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### SBIRT as a vital sign for behavioral health identification, diagnosis and referral in community healthcare

Although problems related to mental health and substance abuse are major social and public health concerns associated with sizable individual and social costs, these conditions remain underdiagnosed in primary care settings. Despite screening recommendations for depression and substance abuse, few studies have examined the efficacy of screening in community health centers. The purpose of this quasi-experimental design study was to examine the effectiveness of the behavioral health Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program at a community health center by comparing a study site where SBIRT activities occurred and a control site where no SBIRT processes ensued. The study group was twice as likely (25.3%) to have depression and substance abuse diagnosed compared with the control group (11.4%;  $p < 0.001$ ). Referral rates for the study group were more likely to occur (12.4%) compared with referral rates for the control group (1.0%;  $P < 0.001$ ). However, the kept appointment rates by patients for behavioral health referrals remained low for both groups. SBIRT was effectively utilized in a community health center, resulting in increased rates for diagnosis of behavioral health problems and referrals of patients. Community health centers and other health care delivery models would improve their diagnostic and interventions rate by implementing a behavioral health screening program.

#### Biography

Ronald Dwinells has received his Medical degree from the University of Kentucky, College of Medicine and his MBA from George Washington University. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio North East Health Systems, Inc., Ohio. He is the President, Chair and Founder of Butterflies and Hope Memorial Foundation supporting improvements in behavioral and mental health problems.

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