

**Title: Implementing psychotherapy training to improve role competency in a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) residency program**

**Authors and Credentials:** Matilda Ryan, MA, MSN, PMHNP-BC, FNP-BC, Portland VA Healthcare System, [matilda.ryan@gmail.com](mailto:matilda.ryan@gmail.com)

**Background:** Although psychotherapy is an essential practice component of the PMHNP role, newer clinicians lack confidence in their ability to deliver psychotherapy interventions where such interventions are indicated.

**Purpose:** (1) To teach Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) to PMHNP Residents at a Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), increasing competence from baseline measure to a rating of "average" or higher by the end of a 13-week training program. (2) To implement the project using a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model to support future residency cohort use.

**Methods:** A QI waiver was obtained in conjunction with VAMC and Duke University institutional review boards (IRBs) for an ACT training intervention for PMHNP residents. The training initiative consists of 13 weekly, 75-minute sessions led by a clinical psychologist to develop residents' knowledge of ACT through both directed and active learning strategies. Data collection was through Qualtrics by anonymous pre/post standardized metric (Act Competency Rating Form) at pre-established intervals (preimplementation, post-implementation, week 4, week 8). Four PDSA cycles based on peer consultation and facilitator discussion were implemented over the course of the project.

**Results:** The training intervention was associated with increased competency. In-group analysis showed substantial gains in Resident competency with the mean competency subscales at or above 3 (average competency). From pre- to post-, particular increases were noted in Present Moment, Defining Values, and Self-as-Context. Four PDSA cycles were completed during the project implementation stage, with feedback leading to modifications, adaptations, and compromises. The project was adopted for future use, becoming part of the standardized curriculum for the joint Duke University/VAMC PMHNP residency program.

**Conclusion:** Formal nurse practitioner residency programs are becoming an increasingly recognized option for those seeking to combine post-graduate training and workforce entry. Quality improvement (QI) projects that fulfill residency requirements may be designed to advance role development.