

Chapter 1

Introduction



Larry C. James, William O' Donohue, and Jeanne Wendel

In the mid-1990s, the first author of this book was practicing as a Clinical Health Psychologist at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. At that time, not only was he the Director of the Army's Fellowship in Clinical Health Psychology, he was also the Director of an innovative Behavioral Medicine inpatient plus outpatient program. The patients who were enrolled in the program had several comorbid disorders such as obesity, type II diabetes, hypertension, and chronic pain. The patients would be admitted to this healthy lifestyle inpatient program for 3 weeks as a cohort of 8–15 patients and then required to participate with their cohort in weekly group cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) follow-up for 12 months. The program was very successful, and the author published his work widely (1997a, b, 1998).

On one afternoon, the medical director of the hospital “just showed up” at Dr. James' office unannounced. He posited the question to Dr. James, “Major James, do you have any data to show that your program is not only clinically effective but does it save my hospital money... Son, we've got to make some hard budget decision and if you cannot produce a draft of a peer reviewed paper ready for submission in one year, I will shut your program down.” Dr. James, in his review of his program, told an audience that “the medical director lied! He actually only gave me 6 months to demonstrate that my program was not only clinically effective but also that we saved the hospital money. This question, or direct order as it were, to show that the program “saved the hospital money,” was a daunting task!”

L. C. James (✉)

Department of Behavioral Health, Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, HI, USA

W. O' Donohue (✉)

Department of Psychology, The University of Nevada, Reno, NV, USA

J. Wendel

Department of Economics, The University of Nevada, Reno, NV, USA

e-mail: wendel@unr.edu

Very few if any clinical health psychologists - and psychologists working in today's hospital settings - are prepared to apply medical cost offset as a dependent variable to determine if their program is "effective."

This book fills an important gap: there are no comprehensive psychology books on the market that cover this important topic. The US population includes more than one million veterans who served in Iraq. The long-term healthcare expenditures for these veterans are expected to require billions of dollars of expenditures by the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and private sector payers. The authors bring a wealth of experience in treatment of service members and veterans, implementation of innovative research programs within military settings, and analysis of health economics issues.

The book *Clinical Health Psychology in Military and Veteran Settings: Innovations for the Future* will offer the reader two parts.

Part I will examine key economic challenges facing civilian, military, and veteran healthcare providers.

The economics section of this book provides a broad overview of issues and trends in the US healthcare system. These issues and trends are relevant for clinicians, innovators, managers, and administrators working with military/VA patients because of the following:

- Public sector and private sector healthcare providers and payers face similar issues and pressures.
- Budget systems and payment systems create incentives for individuals working in care delivery organizations, and these incentive systems shape decisions made within those organizations. A conceptual framework can help clinicians and managers analyze incentive design options and understand constraints imposed by existing incentive systems.
- Clinicians recommending care strategies may need to understand enough about Medicaid and Medicare payment systems to design care strategies that are financially feasible for patients who are eligible for multiple types of insurance.
- Psychologists who plan to implement innovative care strategies in primary care settings may need to demonstrate that the innovation is cost-effective. Innovators designing program evaluation studies will need to consider a series of study planning issues.
- Many healthcare payers and providers, including the VA system, are designing strategies to address the "social determinants of health." Familiarity with the evidence demonstrating the importance of social determinants of health and with programs deployed by some private sector organizations can help clinicians and managers identify and analyze strategic options.
- Health information technology (HIT) offers substantial potential benefits and ongoing implementation challenges. Understanding these issues can help clinicians and managers work with electronic health records systems.
- The US healthcare system is continually evolving. Clinicians will need to understand, assess, and adapt to ongoing changes. Understanding current issues and trends will provide a foundation for developing insights about these changes.

For example, Drs. Patterson and Wendel will offer the reader a review of the US healthcare system and discuss in detail its critical components. Dr. Mary Paterson will discuss critical information that should be required reading for all clinical health psychologists entitled “Clinical Practice & Financial Management.” As COVID-19 continues to rage upon our healthcare system, Alan Yang and Steve Lebedoff offer the reader a “deeper dive” into advances in healthcare communication and Dr. Jeanne Wendel will offer a chapter entitled “How Will You Know Whether Your Efforts To Strengthen Patient Health Are Effective and Efficient” which is simply outstanding.

Part II will discuss innovative clinical health psychology applications in military and VA hospitals and clinics from around the country. Each chapter will have a comprehensive literature review and a presentation of exciting and novel clinical applications in the military hospitals. Case reports will also be a part of each chapter as well as easy-to-use “apps” to offer military and veteran patients. In Chap. 9, Dr. Justin Matsuura et al. will discuss innovations in pain management for service members and veterans. In addition, Dr. Matsuura and his team provide a discussion of innovative and future trends in military-related pain treatment strategies for the future. In Chap. 10, Dr. Schumm and his colleagues push the envelope and draw the association between chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder which is rarely discussed in the current literature.

COVID-19 has had devastating consequences not only on our patients in DOD medical centers around the world but also on the clinical health psychology providers. Drs. Pritchard and James offer the reader a new perspective on the role of clinical health psychologists in the COVID-19 response. Larry James and Aina Katsikas continue the important and innovative discussion on the health psychologists’ telehealth applications for the COVID-19 response. These authors discuss, as a result of COVID-19, telehealth applications as well as practical and ethical considerations when providing services via telehealth.

In Chaps. 13 and 14, Dr. Susan George and her colleagues have offered chapters on areas that have never been discussed in a health psychology book. The authors respectively discuss clinical health psychology applications related to transgendered veterans and the health psychologist’s role in family domestic violence. Just one example of importance of these two chapters is the work of clinical health psychologists at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu. The health psychology service at this hospital has responsibility for the assessment and treatment of transgendered service member, and there is a paucity of research or treatment manuals for the delivery of behavioral health services to this population. Thus, Dr. George et al.’s work can be seen as critical and a landmark discussion of these issues. Finally, in our last chapter, we recognize that many military health psychologists in the Department of Defense are credentialed to prescribe, order medical labs, and conduct physicals. Thus, Chap. 15 is a very innovative discussion on how to apply medical labs and tests as assessment tools for health psychologists. Chapter 15 will serve as **the** clinical guide for military and veteran health psychologists around the country in doing health assessments for many years to come.

References

- James, L., Folen, R., Garland, F., & Davis, M. (1997a). New Frontiers for clinical health psychology: Our leadership role in inpatient weight management programs. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 28*(2), 146–152.
- James, L., Folen, R., Garland, F., Noce, M., Edwards, C., Gohdes, D., Bowles, S., & Kellar, M. (1997b). The Tripler LEAN PROGRAM: A healthy lifestyle model for the treatment of obesity. *Military Medicine, 162*, 328–332.
- James, L. C., Folen, R. A., & Noce, M. A. (1998). A healthy lifestyle program for the treatment of obesity in minority men. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings, 5*(3), 259–273.