

# November 4, 2015 - SBIRT and the Electronic Health Record: Featuring Tom McLellan Questions and Answers

1. **Can you comment on any cost savings, or are you studying the costs of implementing SBIRT into these settings?**

Answer - It must be said that not all results of SBIRT studies are positive but most are. A very large study of SBIRT in emergency rooms was done in the state of Washington. All admissions to nine ERs were screened but only half (randomly picked) received the BI and where needed the referral to treatment. They examined the use of all covered medical services (Medicaid) in the following year and found that the group that got the full BI and RT showed reductions of over \$3,000 per patient over the group that simply got screened. I would not generalize from this study - it is fair to say that SBIRT is most cost effective for patients having clear substance-related medical problems (where alcohol or drugs is complicating their medical problem) BUT where the severity and chronicity of the substance use is NOT serious addiction. Not surprisingly very brief interventions rarely work with serious chronic illnesses - addiction is no exception

2. **How were you able to fund the health clinic?**

Answer - I assume you are talking about the high school project. This was funded by the addiction treatment program (Phoenix House) - they put up the money for the construction of the "clinic" within the high school and for all training and hiring of the counselors (2 counselors FT). TRI funded the creation of the software. The total amount came to about \$125,000 for one year of work. BUT - once the SBIRT project started the billings from screenings and BIs were enough to more than offset the continuing costs of providing the services - and in one year Phoenix House received 14 referrals for addiction treatment (some teens but mostly parents) and those revenues produced a significant surplus. Phoenix House is still doing this work and believes it is a very good financial as well as clinical investment

3. **How can this program be used for career development in health care to interest students and use diverse funding to support this healthcare learning within the schools?**

Answer - I have not thought about that and I have no expertise or experience in this area. Does seem like the kind of training environment that would be excellent for training new counselors, social workers and psychologists - BUT it should be clear that doing BI counseling is sophisticated work - three of the counselors simply could not do it.