ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: If We Build It, Will They Know to Come? Mental Health Literacy, the Health Belief Model, and Intentions to Seek Help.

STUDENT: Kevin T. Cannon

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

COLLEGE: College of Health

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Mental health disorders are highly pervasive worldwide and represent a significant proportion of the disease burden, with the World Health Organization projecting a continued increase in prevalence and burden for the foreseeable future. Despite the high need for mental health care and the availability of effective evidence-based mental health treatments, a significant proportion of individuals with high needs for mental health care never receive treatment, delay seeking care, or drop out of treatment prematurely. Thus, there is a significant need for research aimed at delineating the factors that inhibit and the factors that facilitate seeking mental health care. Guided by the health belief model (HBM) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the current study examined the role of health beliefs, mental health literacy (MHL), and sociodemographic variables in predicting intentions to seek mental health care. Structural equation modeling was used to compare two hypothesized models and one empirically derived model. One model contained only the factors hypothesized by the HBM, a second model specified the HBM factors as mediators of the relationship between MHL and intentions to seek help, and a third model specified an alternative arrangement of the HBM factors and MHL in predicting intentions to seek help. Model comparison analyses indicated the model containing

only the HBM factors was the optimally fitting model, with perceived benefits, perceived

barriers, and self-efficacy as the strongest predictors of intentions to seek mental health care.

Additional analyses suggested significant group differences between males and females, as well

as between individuals with and without previous help-seeking experiences. Implications,

limitations, and directions for future research are discussed.