

Evaluating Emergency Department and Urgent Care Utilization Trends of Patients with Health-Related Social Needs

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Background

It is well known that health related social needs (HRSN) impact long-term health outcomes including quality and length of life. Our study sought to examine the relationship between HRSN burden and emergency department (ED) and urgent care utilization at an urban tertiary care center.

Methods

Patients presenting to the ED were approached for HRSN screening using an abridged PRAPARE survey tool. Patients who screened positive for HRSN were provided with referrals for local support and resources. Patient information on ED and urgent care visits 12 months prior to the intervention was then extracted from their electronic medical records and used for analysis. Patients were sorted into four different groups based on the number of HRSN (G1 = 0 needs, G2 = 1-2 needs, G3 = 3-4 needs, G4 = 5+ needs). The primary outcome measured was mean monthly ED and urgent care visits by HRSN group.

Results

Black female patients were overrepresented in our cohort compared to an ED census taken during the same time period. Our results also demonstrated a positive association between increasing HRSN burden and ED utilization. No clear association was observed between HRSN burden and urgent care use.

Conclusions

HRSN burden is directly associated with ED utilization. Therefore, addressing HRSN in the ED setting may serve as an ideal target to reduce ED use and overall healthcare costs. In addition, we identified a high-risk minority patient population that may benefit from future targeted interventions.