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Health Care for the Homeless: An Aging Demographic 2006 to 2010

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Abstract

Background: Health Care for the Homeless medically cares for and collects data about homeless patients.
Objectives: To study demographics, health care needs unique to the rapidly growing elderly female population.
Methods: De-identified surveys completed at 300 national clinics.
Results: Increase in elderly females. Improved illness, cancer screen, but still below national averages.
Conclusion: Subset is susceptible to age, gender-related disease, mental health illness, lack of coping skills and poor resources.

Background

Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) program is a grant program that funds 208 grantees in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In 2010, HCH projects served 805,064 patients, 90.3% of which were living at or below the federal poverty level.

In 2010, 1.59 million people spent at least one night in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program.

2.8% of this population was over the age of 62.

Elderly homeless expected to increase by 33% between 2010 and 2020.

Methods

Data collected by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) and reported to the Uniform Data Systems (UDS).

Data collected in de-identified surveys and published in aggregate annual, national reports.

Frequency of key demographic variables and diagnostic, preventative health variables examined across 2006 to 2010.

Data were compared graphically and statistically using non-parametric Chi-square tests.

Results

Table 1. Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
<td>% TOTAL</td>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Patients</td>
<td>701,621</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt;65 years old</td>
<td>118,611</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65-79 years old</td>
<td>165,756</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 80+ years old</td>
<td>17,773</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

Male: 303,783 | 43.4% | 343,327 | 42.5% | 39,544 | 5.6% |

Race

Caucasian: 223,229 | 31.5% | 265,124 | 33.0% | 41,895 | 5.8% |

Hispanic or Latino: 148,203 | 21.3% | 178,232 | 22.1% | 30,029 | 4.0% |

Asian/Pacific Islander/American Indian/Alaska Native: 24,040 | 3.4% | 32,971 | 4.1% | 8,931 | 1.2% |

Unspecified/Refused to report: 52,408 | 7.4% | 129,852 | 16.1% | 77,444 | 10.7% |

Race

< Race: 23,462 | 2.9% |

Housing Status

Shelter: 276,495 | 38.7% | 298,488 | 37.1% | 22,028 | 3.0% |

Transitional: 82,043 | 11.8% | 107,327 | 13.4% | 25,284 | 3.5% |

Double-UP: 112,524 | 16.0% | 176,014 | 21.9% | 63,490 | 8.7% |

Street: 70,704 | 10.1% | 75,310 | 9.4% | 4,606 | 0.6% |

Other: 47,279 | 6.6% | 70,843 | 9.0% | 23,564 | 3.2% |

Insurance

Uninsured: 56,051 | 8.0% | 67,031 | 8.3% | 10,980 | 1.5% |

Income as % Percent Poverty level

< 200%: 324,116 | 45.1% | 323,615 | 40.4% | 5,501 | 0.7% |

200-150%: 30,644 | 4.3% | 38,901 | 4.8% | 8,257 | 1.1% |

150-200%: 19,598 | 2.7% | 15,816 | 1.9% | 3,782 | 0.5% |

200%+: 9,009 | 1.2% | 12,200 | 1.5% | 3,191 | 0.5% |

Unrelated: 112,524 | 16.0% | 104,067 | 13.0% | 7,457 | 1.0% |

Insurance, % Total Population

Uninsured: 492,093 | 69.2% | 522,061 | 64.6% | 30,968 | 4.4% |

Medicaid: 153,551 | 21.8% | 190,394 | 23.6% | 36,843 | 5.1% |

Medicare: 24,882 | 3.4% | 29,097 | 3.6% | 4,215 | 0.6% |

Other Public Insurance: 15,416 | 2.2% | 24,784 | 3.1% | 9,368 | 1.3% |

Private insurance: 17,260 | 2.4% | 23,204 | 2.9% | 6,044 | 0.9%

Table 2. Select Primary Diagnoses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
<td>% TOTAL</td>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular Related Diseases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus</td>
<td>11,937</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
<td>5,585</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>4,625</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrhythmia</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse/Mental Health Disease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td>10,341</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other substance abuse (excluding tobacco)</td>
<td>23,573</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>14,092</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression/Other Mental Health</td>
<td>20,960</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety including PTSD</td>
<td>11,190</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Women’s Health Screening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
<td>% GROUP</td>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pap Test</td>
<td>10,341</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammogram</td>
<td>14,092</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cervical Findings</td>
<td>8,797</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynecological Findings</td>
<td>8,797</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Total Population by Gender

Figure 2. Elderly Patients aged 85+ years old by Gender

Figure 3. Age and Gender

Figure 4. Elderly Population By Age Group

Summary

• Elderly homeless population is increasing; elderly females rising more rapidly than males.
• Elderly female population has unique co-morbidities of chronic disease, age-related cognitive impairment and frailty, mental illness, and gender-related disease.
• Trends of increased mammograms, pap tests, diabetes, hypertension, mental illness screens, but still well below national averages.
• Fewer patients living in homeless shelters, on the street; more in transitional living facilities, doubled-up
• Fewer patients uninsured; more Medicare, Medicaid, other public and private insurance.

Conclusion

• “Elderly” population may be substantially larger than age-defined calculations due to pre-mature aging, co-morbidities associated with homelessness.
• Targeted evaluation, social and health care related management are crucial.
• Primary care efforts must be matched by public health and policy initiatives
• Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) should help alleviate unmet needs.
• PPACA to provide $1 billion to Health Centers over the course of 2011 through 2015

Contact Information

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