Documenting Social and Behavioral Factors: Insights from Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations

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Background

- Potentially preventable hospitalizations (PPH) are those that could be avoided with access to high-quality primary care.
- Social and behavioral factors likely play a role in PPH, but may not be adequately captured in the medical record.

Objective

- We performed a mixed-methods study to understand patient perspectives of the factors that lead to their PPH related to:
  - Diabetes
  - Heart Disease

Methods

- From June 2013-February 2016, we identified adults (18+ years) hospitalized with a PPH for diabetes or heart disease.
- We collected three types of data:
  - Electronic Medical Record (EMR) data
  - Survey: closed-ended items (e.g., poverty) validated scales (e.g., low health literacy by REALM)
  - Interview eliciting patients’ reasons for their hospitalization

Stud Y Site

This study was conducted at Queen’s Medical Center, the largest hospital in Hawai‘i and the primary tertiary medical referral center for the Pacific Basin.

Percent Race/Ethnicity in Sample (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Other PI</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Health Communication Challenges

- From the EMR we learned:
  - Health communication challenges are typically invisible in the EMR

- From the questionnaire we learned:
  - 66% of participants had low health literacy (LHL)

Social Factors

- 42% of patients told a story describing that inadequate knowledge lead to their PPH.

Mental Health

- 26% reported being sad or blue 30 out of 30 days in the past month.

- 9.8% reported drinking 4 or more alcoholic beverages on days when they do drink.

BUT:

- Patients with PPH had many social disadvantages, including poverty (at least 55%), that are typically beyond the scope of acute care assessment and intervention.

- Patients’ stories revealed how social challenges impacted their chronic care management, regardless of access to primary care.

- Unstable housing/homelessness (23%), limited their ability to adhere to (and, for some, their interest in following) their prescribed medication and lifestyle regimes, likely leading to their preventable hospitalization.

Implications

- Many contextual factors that explain PPH are unlikely to appear in EMR data, but may need to be assessed and addressed to reduce preventable hospitalizations.

- Better documenting, and then integrating, patient complex social needs into clinical care holds promise for higher quality, lower cost healthcare and better population health.

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