The Burden of Dental Problems on Ohio’s Emergency Departments

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Presentation Overview

- Background
- Purpose
- Methodology
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Background

- Many Ohioans cannot afford to go to a private dentist or have difficulty accessing one that will accept their method of payment
  - Individuals may then turn to hospital emergency departments (EDs) to alleviate dental problems
- Most EDs are not staffed with a dentist who can regularly provide definitive care
Purpose

• To describe the extent that patients in Ohio are utilizing hospital EDs to alleviate dental problems
Methodology

• Data on hospital visits provided to ODH from Ohio Hospital Association for January 2010 through June 2011
• Data from Ohio Medicaid Claims provided to ODH by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services for SFY 2010 and 2011
• ED visit for dental problem defined as:
  – Had a emergency department source code
  – Had an ICD-9 primary diagnosis code consistent with non-trauma related dental pain and infection (included in groups 521-523; 525; 873)
Results – The Basics, All Patients

- Over 100,000 visits to the ED for primary dental diagnosis over an 18-month period totaling just over $58 million in hospital charges
  - Roughly 200 visits and $100,000 in charges per day statewide
  - Most occurred on weekdays (69%)
  - Most visits were by patients age 22-44 years (57%)
  - Higher rate of utilization among non-Hispanic blacks (19% versus 12% in the population)
  - Most visits were by patients who were uninsured or insurance through public coverage
Source of Payment for Dental ED Visits in Ohio, 2010-11

- Public Insurance: 40,365 visits (41%)
- Private Insurance: 13,706 visits (14%)
- Other or Unknown Insurance: 1,215 visits (1%)
- Uninsured: 43,934 visits (44%)
Results – The Basics, Patients Covered by Medicaid

- About 23 percent of patients covered by Medicaid with an ED visit for dental problems had multiple visits to an Ohio ED for dental problems.
- Dental problems represent just under 4% of all patients covered by Medicaid who sought care in an Ohio ED.
Rate of Emergency Department Visits for Non-Traumatic Dental Problems for Patients Covered by Medicaid by County in Ohio, State Fiscal Year 2011
(Statewide = 13.8)

Legend
ED Dental Patients per 1,000 Enrolled
- 10 and lower
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- Over 25

Data Source: Ohio Medicaid Claims Data, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Conclusions and Implications

• Many patients in Ohio are seeking to alleviate dental problems in hospital EDs
• Most are uninsured or publically insured
• There appear to be demographic and geographic differences in utilization
  – Need to further explore if geographical differences are associated with:
    • Lack of nearby primary care dental providers
    • Lack of nearby primary care dental providers who serve low-income patients
    • Other demographic and socioeconomic indicators
Conclusions – Strengths and Weaknesses

• Strengths
  – Relies on two sources of data
    • Data is relatively consistent between sources
  – Methodology is consistent with other studies

• Weaknesses
  – Relies on physician diagnostic coding and hospital data reporting
  – Data on all patients provided by the Ohio Hospital Association does not provide patient nor hospital identifiers
  – Information on cost/charges not available through Medicaid claims data
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