Referrals to an Opioid Overdose Program with EMS Involvement: Comparing Treatment Outcomes

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Abstract

Problem. Rising rates of opioid overdose deaths continue to be a significant public health concern. Limited evidence supports the effectiveness of programs utilizing a Recovery Coach in the Emergency Department (ED) after an opioid overdose. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the method of arrival to the ED for an opioid overdose affects engagement and retention in an opioid overdose program utilizing a Recovery Coach in the ED.

Methods: The primary investigator evaluated the EPICC program by conducting a retrospective chart review of individuals referred between December 2016 and October 2018. The study compared clients who arrived at the ED via EMS and clients who arrived another mode of transportation.

Results. During this period, 1,769 referrals (N=1,769) met project inclusion criteria. 31.7% of individuals arrived via EMS (n=560) and 68.3% arrived another mode of transportation (n=1,209). Results from χ² found a statistically significant relationship between arrival to the ED and early engagement and retention in the EPICC program.

Implications for Practice. Clients who arrive at the ED without EMS are more likely to initially engage and remain in the EPICC project versus those who arrive with EMS. Differences may be affected by motivation for treatment, as individuals who arrive via EMS may present involuntarily and have less motivation than individuals who voluntarily present to the ED. Implications of this project should consider how to reduce the number of individuals who arrive by EMS and decline program participation and how to support them in recovery effectively.