ASTHMA COACH INTERVENTION TO REDUCE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS AND INPATIENT HOSPITALIZATIONS

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Children with uncontrolled asthma often require multiple hospitalizations and emergency department (ED) visits, putting undue burden and risk on these patients. Based on research performed at Washington University in St. Louis on the effects of asthma coaches on patient outcomes, we developed a program to determine whether non-licensed (lay) asthma coaches reduce ED visits and inpatient (IP) stays among high risk pediatric patients. The asthma coach is trained in motivational interviewing, but has limited clinical experience. The coach works closely with the families of children with severe or difficult to control asthma for one year to develop goals and provide support.

Methods:

Retrospective chart reviews were performed using the Missouri Medicaid database as well as inpatient records. Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for the 12 months prior, during, and 12 months following completion of the intervention were collected on 93 patients. To adjust for varying lengths of time in the program, monthly averages were obtained for the number of ED visits and hospitalizations. Comparisons were made using percent decreases and paired t-tests.

Results:

Paired t-tests showed that average number of IP admissions and ED visits per month while enrolled in the program were significantly less than the average for the 12 months prior to enrollment (t=4.59, p<.0001 and t=3.61, p<.001). For the 12 months after completion of the program, the decrease in hospitalizations remained significantly lower than pre-enrollment (t=5.22, p<.0001). However, although a decrease in ED visits was maintained, it was not statistically significant (t=1.49, p>.05) compared to pre-enrollment. Future analysis will explore these findings and implications for practice.

Conclusion:

Final analysis showed 48% of all participants demonstrated a reduction in number of hospitalizations, ED visits, or both after completing the program. Our lay asthma coach program is successful in reducing ED visits and hospitalizations for asthma.