Lack of Gender Differences in Prevalence of Homelessness in the Emergency Department (Poster).

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Introduction

- Over 500,000 people are homeless each night in America
- They have substantially higher rates of Emergency Department (ED) and hospital use
- Current research has not focused on gender differences
- Awareness of the population’s characteristics should help with identifying the patients and providing care

Methods

- Data was collected from 5/2015 - 2/2016 in the three LVHN EDs after IRB approval
- Patients were approached to take a prospective five-question homelessness screening survey
- To participate, patients had to be: 18 years or older, speak English, have capacity, not be critically ill, and be willing to participate

Survey
1. Been concerned about losing you housing
2. Changed residences more than twice
3. Lives with a friend or family member you do not normally reside with due to financial hardship
4. Been evicted or served an eviction notice
5. Slept outside, in an abandoned building, your car, in an emergency shelter, or in a motel due to financial hardship

Results

- 4494 subjects met inclusion criteria, but 99 surveys were excluded (took the survey before); 4395 subjects were analyzed in total
- The mean age of subjects was 50.8 years (SD=20.5) and 2557 (58.2%) were women
- No difference in the rate of homelessness was observed between male and female participants with 135 men out of 1835 (7.4%) and 173 our of 2557 (6.8%) women screening positive, (p=0.472)
- The mean age of those screening positive was 42.4 years (SD=16.2) and women was 43.7 years (SD=16.9)
- Both men (N=41) and women (N=40) admitted they had slept outside, in an abandoned building, in their car, a shelter or a motel due to financial hardship

Discussion

- 40 women and 41 men answered “yes” to a concrete question about sleeping outside or in an abandoned building
- Other studies showed homelessness associated with adult males that are more likely to have a psychiatric or substance abuse problem
- Current resources that are not gender specific may not meet their housing and healthcare needs

Conclusion

- We did not observe differences in the rate of homelessness between men and women who screened positive for homelessness in the ED
- This combats stereotypes that this social issue is a problem primarily affecting male populations
- Public health interventions aimed at homeless populations should be cognizant that both genders are dealing with this burden
- A deeper understanding of the demographics of homelessness may allow for better access to medical treatment since women have different health care needs than men

References:

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