

Access to Dental Care in the Lehigh Valley Health Network

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Access to Dental Care in the Lehigh Valley Health Network



By: Carissa Miller



Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania



What is access to Healthcare?

“Services that help individuals, families and organizations manage healthcare effectively and affordably. This includes finding and appropriate plan to coordinating care and making community connections to offering eligibility screening.”

-Access to Healthcare Network

Why is access to Dental Care important?

- Abscessed teeth can produce spreading infections that can be fatal
- Most hospitals will not treat or operate on patients with dental caries
- Poor oral health can intensify heart disease, diabetes and other conditions
- Decayed, broken or missing teeth affect self-esteem and communication skills
- Statistics show many hospital emergency visits are related to dental problems

Research Question

When provided with easy access to dental care in the Lehigh Valley Health Network do patients take advantage of the opportunity for better oral health?

Goals

- To make dental care easily accessible to patients in need
- To observe the number of patients who act upon reduced cost care

Sample Population

- English or Spanish Speaking
- Patients of all ages
- Lehigh Valley Health Network Patients

Clinic Background

Our dental hygienists, dental assistants and residents give back to the community through our dental clinic at Lehigh Valley Hospital-17th Street. Our staff provides dental care at a reduced cost for those in need. Patients are referred to our office for reasons such as poor dental care, physical or mental disabilities, excessive pain, cavities, routine check-ups or cleanings. This clinic participates in Give Kids a Smile Day which is an annual event that provides free dental care for children and also offers children in the Allentown area free dental care by means of the Miles for Smiles van.

Methods

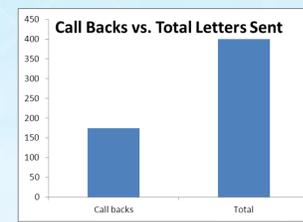
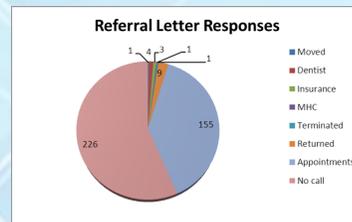
- Send out new patient letters
- Record number of appointments
- Record other arrangements
- Compile data into a table
- Calculate percentage of patient call backs

Clinic Attending Dentists

General Dentists			
Douglas Atno, DMD	Edward J. Piorkowski Jr., DDS	Eric Marsh, DMD	Thomas Lambert, DMD
Russ Bergman, DMD	Michele Pisano-Marsh, DMD	MaryBeth Mihalakis, DMD	Michael Lentz, DDS
Deborah Campbell, DMD	Adnan Qayyum, DDS	Adam Miller, DMD	Martin Leymeister, DMD
Ian Carlis, DMD	Jennifer Risley, DMD	Nicole Miller, DDS	Lucas Mantilla, DMD
Kimberly DeWire, DMD	Rami Salloum, DDS	Gerald Millheim, DMD	Edmund Levendusky, DDS
Amedeo DiEdwardo, DDS	Jesus Sanchez Ocasio, DMD	Mark Notis, DMD	S. Clarke Woodruff, DMD
Patricia Gardner, DMD	Paul Schwarzbach, DDS	Shirley Nylund, DMD	John Worsley, DMD
Barry Glassman, DMD	Tejinder Singh, DDS	Jacqueline Owens, DMD	Robert Yoder, DMD
Charles Incalcaterra, DMD	Elizabeth Skelly, DMD	Alan Parker, DMD	Bradford Young, DMD
George Kirchner, DDS	Karla Stanz, DMD	Michael Parsons, DMD	Sophia Kladias, DMD
Jennifer Koch, DMD	Paula Stone, DMD	Vinky Pathak, DMD	Gary Peters, DDS
Charles Kosteva, DDS	Brandon Walsh, DMD	Jason Pellegrino, DMD	Davis Packman, DDS
	John Ziegler, DDS		Joseph Schaffer, DDS
Oral Surgery			
David Bender, DMD			
Jamie Cernansky, DMD			
Gregory Dimmich, DMD			
Mark Grim, DMD			
Ankur Johri, DDS			
Robert Laski, DMD			
Antoine Panossian, DMD			
Niral Parikh, DDS			
Larry Popowich, DDS			
Eugene Roginsky, DMD			
J. Victor Ehrens, DMD			
Pediatric Dentists			
Deanna Dudenbostel, DMD			
Marsha Gordon, DDS			
Wanda Janik, DMD			
Arnith Majumdar, DMD			
Ryan McGuire, DMD			
Sreedevik Sheka, DDS			
Dilshad Sumar, DMD			
Jeannine Wyke, DMD			
Endodontists			
Bilal Chaudhry, DMD			
Joel Glickman, DMD			
Michael Gonsky, DDS			
Joseph Silvaggio III, DMD			
Mark Eisner, DMD			
Howard Seldon, DDS			
Orthodontists			
Jason Hartman, DMD			
Philip L. Tighe Jr., DMD			
Periodontists			
Scott Gradwell, DMD			
Elliot Shear, DDS			
J. Brian Straka, DMD			
Thomas McKee, DMD			
Prosthodontist			
Peter Davis, DDS			
Ronald Hersh, DMD			
Jack Karabasz, DMD			
Bernard Servagno, DMD			

Results

Upon the completion of my study, 43.50% of patients responded to the letters. 155 patients called and made appointments while a few patients called to deny care with reasons such as seeking treatment at the Muhlenberg Dental Clinic, they found a dentist, they have insurance that we do not take, or they moved out of state. Nine letters were returned to sender and never delivered. Out of the appointments made in July, the clinic has seen a 100% show.



Discussion

In the pie chart light blue represents 155 patients who called to make an appointment, pink represents 226 patients who did not respond and the other colors are other arrangements made by patients out of the 400 letters originally sent the beginning of June. Out of the appointments made in July, the clinic has seen a 100% show. Since referral letters had arrived to us within the previous six months to a year, most of the patients may have found other care providers or not responded because they had no need to be seen which explains the high number of non-respondents. With a call back percentage of 43.5 and 38.75% of those patients making appointments, the numbers are significant enough to show a continuing trend in Lehigh Valley Health Network's access to dental care.

Miles of Smiles

Miles of Smiles mobile Dental Clinic was created in 2009 by Lehigh Valley Health Network to serve low-income, uninsured or underinsured children. Including minorities without access due to financial, transportation and or cultural barriers. The van has two fully equipped treatment rooms staffed by a dentist, hygienist, dental assistant and a driver/medical clerk. Miles of Smiles provides basic dental services, restorative services, oral surgery and endodontic services, oral hygiene and diet and nutrition education. Miles of Smiles serves as a dental home for the children of the Allentown School District. Washington Elementary, Central Elementary, Roosevelt Elementary and Sheridan Elementary are four schools that were chosen by the district but, the van also serves children from other schools in Allentown at the end of the school day. For most of these students this is their first trip to the dentist. The van is funded by Capital Blue Cross, the Pennsylvania Department of Health Community Primary Care Challenge Grant, the Highmark Foundation, the Lehigh Valley Department of Dental Medicine, volunteer groups affiliated with the hospital and hundreds of gifts from individuals, businesses and others throughout the community.

Children Treated	Percent
Female	49%
Male	51%
Hispanic or Latino	31.5%
African American	14.5%
Multi-ethnic	14.0%
White	27.0%
Other (parents did not specify)	13.0%

Dental Care Provided	Number
Care	Number
Patients Treated	6,706
Visits to Miles of Smiles	12,909
Procedures	36,470
Treatment Completed	2,196
Charity Care Value	\$2,193,155

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