

Care Transitions for Homeless Patients

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Introduction

Homelessness affects more than 1.5 million people each year in the United States. These individuals face multiple health risks and have mortality rates more than double that of the general population.¹ Research has shown that homeless patients are hospitalized more frequently than other people and have longer hospital stays and costs.² Hospitals nationwide struggle to discharge these patients once their medical issues are resolved because they still have to figure out where they will go, how they will get their medications and when and where they will follow up.

The aim of this research project was to determine the concerns of homeless patients regarding their hospital stay, discharge and their likelihood of complying with treatment plans and follow up. The hope is that through this project, we may improve how we help these patients transition their care and increase the likelihood they remain healthy by addressing what they find most important.

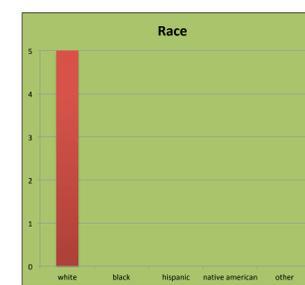
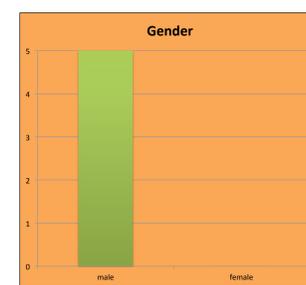
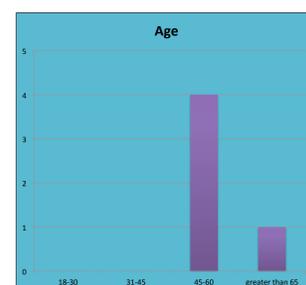
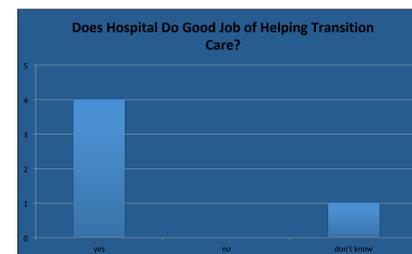
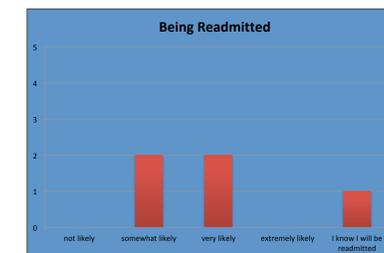
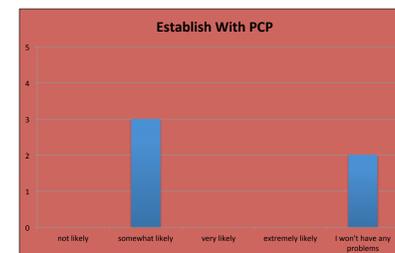
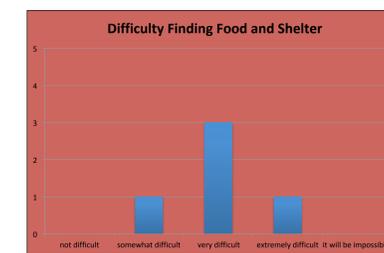
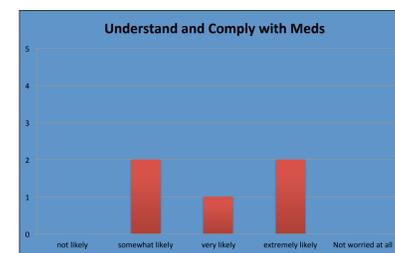
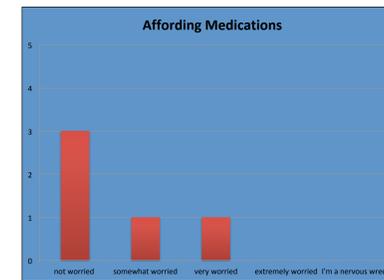
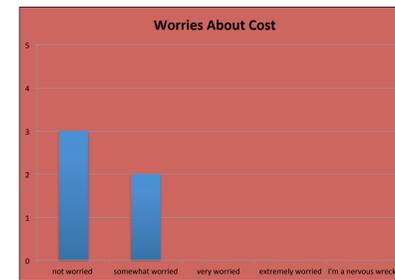
Methods

Patients being cared for by the Family Medicine Red Team at BUMC-S, who were also identified as being homeless on admission, were invited to participate in this study. Those who agreed to participate were consented and given a questionnaire to fill out with questions to assess their concern regarding issues surrounding their hospital stay and discharge.

Questionnaire also included items aimed at obtaining demographics of the population that was being surveyed, including gender, age and race.

In addition, a literature review of articles detailing issues surrounding the care of homeless patients was conducted in order to assist in constructing the study questionnaire.

Results



Conclusions

The data show that homeless patients are more concerned about finding food and shelter after being discharged than they are about the cost of their hospitalization, affording and understanding how to take medications and finding a primary care provider to follow up with. They were least worried about their hospital costs and affording medications. Approximately 80% of respondents felt it was somewhat to very likely they would be readmitted however. Overall, these patients believe that the hospital is effective at ensuring safe hospital care transitions. This is believed to be due to increased access to healthcare coverage, making it easier for these patients to cover their medical costs.³ Concern about increased likelihood of being readmitted can be attributed to unsafe living conditions after discharge in addition to limited access to nutrition that could exacerbate their medical conditions.

These results indicate that efforts to improve transitions of care for homeless patients should focus primarily on ensuring these individuals have a safe place to go and provide resources about where they may get a meal.

References

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