

The relationship of access to health care and the hospitalization rate of an individual with a mental illness.

Misty Collins
Social Work Department
University of TN at Chattanooga



ABSTRACT

The objective of the studies included in the abstracts was to determine how health care insurance correlates to a patient's rate of hospitalization at an inpatient mental health facility. The effect of insurance coverage on an individual with a mental illness will determine their access to medical care (Mcalpine, 2000). The studies in the abstracts have shown that lack of health care insurance directly affects a patient's access to resources such as mental health centers (Druss, 1998). If an individual with a mental illness is able to receive the appropriate services required for them to function in society they must have access to sufficient resources in order to do so. This study will look at the relationship between health care insurance and how it affects the access to mental health care for individuals with severe psychiatric diagnosis. Research will also prove if there is a relationship between an individual with a severe psychiatric diagnosis at an inpatient mental health facility that has private insurance versus state issued insurance. "Persons with severe mental illness have a high level of economic and social disadvantage. Barriers to care, including lack of insurance are substantial and many do not receive specialty care. Public insurance programs are the major points of leverage for improving access..." (Mcalpine, 2000, p 277) to care. So, although having a mental illness is not determined by an individuals race, gender, age or socioeconomic status this will impact the treatment received by the individual due to the lack of health care acquired. "Mental illness may be one of the more important areas in which the lack of insurance coverage leads to serious deleterious health consequences which impact both the individual and society" (McLaughlin, 2004, p.222).

PURPOSE/RATIONALE

The purpose of the study is to determine how having access to health care affects the treatment of an individual with a psychiatric diagnosis. The type of health care insurance provided to the individual will affect the treatment they will receive as well. When an individual is diagnosed with a mental illness they require the assistance of many professionals including doctors and therapist. Treatment will be affected if the insurance provided to them (or lack of insurance) doesn't cover the treatment necessary to aid in controlling the effects that they will experience due to their illness. By studying the effects of access to health care for these individuals it is hoped that the link to having insurance and the care that these individuals receive will be looked at more seriously by our society and government. In return the policies that effect these individuals treatment will be more appropriate to the care that they require.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLING FRAME

The population sampling frame used to conduct the research will be chosen from 1500 admitted patients, between February 2007 and January 2008 that have received inpatient treatment at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institution. These individuals should be diverse in age, race, gender and culture. They will range in age from 18 and older.

DESCRIPTION OF METHODS TO SELECT STUDY SAMPLE

Using the systematic random sampling method the individuals selected will be based out of 250 admitted patients a month and the data will be collected from a one year time period consisting of 1500 patients. This will be done by collecting a five percent sample of the sampling frame. The selected sample will consist of every 20th patient until 60 have been selected.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To answer the first research question, a correlation analysis was run to examine the relationship between a patients' access to have health care insurance and their hospitalization rate. A weak negative correlation was found ($r(58)=-.121, p>.05$) indicating a significant relationship between the two variables.

To answer the second research question a correlation analysis was run to examine the relationship between an individual with a severe psychiatric diagnosis receiving health care insurance through private insurance and those that have state insurance. I was unable to run a correlation for this variable due to the coding.

STUDY PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS STEPS

My design study is a nonexperimental secondary data collection. I will go to the records department at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institution, sign a confidentiality form, and fill out my approved data collection form.

1. Data will be collected and entered into SPSS.
2. Descriptive statistics will be run to check for data distribution and skewness.
3. For the first research question, descriptions will be summed to create a total score. T-tests will be run to look for differences between the groups. A correlation analysis will be run to examine the relationship between health care insurance and the hospitalization rate of an individual with a severe psychiatric diagnosis.
4. For the second research question, T-tests will be run to look for the differences between the groups. A correlation analysis will be run to examine the relationship between individuals with a severe psychiatric diagnosis receiving health care insurance through private insurance and those that have state issued insurance.

DESCRIPTIVES

In the overall sample ($N=60$), the majority of participants (65 percent) were Caucasian. Alternatively, the minority of participants (1.7 percent) were Mexican. Further, (33.3 percent) of the participants were African American. Of the overall sample ($N=60$), 50 percent of the participants were female and 50 percent were male.

In the overall sample ($N=60$), the majority of participants (25 percent) had blue care for their insurance provider. The minority of participants (5 percent) did not have a insurance provider. Alternatively, (20 percent) of the participants had either TennCare or Medicare as their provider, (16.7 percent) had private insurance and (13.3 percent) did not respond.

An analysis of the overall sample ($N=60$), the majority of participants (53.3 percent) were admitted between one to five times to the agency. Alternatively 16.7 percent of the participants were admitted between six and ten times, 6.7 percent were admitted 11 to 15 times. Further, 5 percent were admitted 16 to 20 times, 5 percent were admitted 21 to 25 times and 5 percent were admitted 31 to 35 times. Other participants had been admitted 26 to 30 times (3.3 percent). The minority of participants (1.7 percent) were admitted 36 to 40 times, 1.7 percent were admitted 41 to 45 times and 1.7 percent were admitted 46 to 50 times.

RESULTS

To answer the first research question, a correlation analysis was run to examine the relationship between a patients' access to have health care insurance and their hospitalization rate. A negative correlation was found ($r(58)=-.121, p>.05$) indicating no significant relationship between the two variables.

To answer my second research a correlation analysis will be ran to examine the relationship between individuals with a severe psychiatric diagnosis receiving health care insurance through private insurance and those that have state issued insurance. I was unable to answer this question due to the coding of the variables.



DISCUSSION

To answer my research questions a correlation was run. The findings were not significant, meaning that the patients type of insurance does not affect their access to mental health facilities. During my research I only selected 60 cases out of 1500, which made my sample very small. If I would have chosen a bigger sample to conduct my research on, I believe the results would have been significant resulting in a greater connection between the patients type of insurance and their rate of hospitalization at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institution. Due to the coding of the variables in my research I was unable to run a correlation on the relationship between individuals with a severe psychiatric diagnosis receiving health care insurance through private insurance and those that have state issued insurance. If I was able to run a correlation I believe it would have shown a relationship between a patient having state insurance and private insurance and the services they receive by inpatient mental health facilities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. It is cost effective by aiding in the preventive care of serious health consequences due to the lack of treatment.
2. Social workers must ensure that employers are following policies such as the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 that requires mental health benefits for employees.
3. Social workers should empower clients to be more involved in their health care decisions and treatment.
4. Social workers should seek the appropriate change in policies that affect health insurance for those individuals with a mental illness.
5. Social workers should educate the local communities about the discrimination that individuals with mental disabilities may face.