The Development Of An Interprofessional Continuity Of Care Work-Flow Model Between Emergency Medicine And Dentistry: An Exploration

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Background

A gap in the continuity of care concerning Michigan Medicine patients with dental pain has been identified. It has been reported that often-times, patients with dental pain present, an urgent care facility, or the hospital emergency department as opposed to a dental provider. Additionally, the primary care physicians, emergency room physicians and urgent care physicians are not equipped with the right resources to help guide these patients into finding a place for definitive dental treatment and care. Therefore, these patients often suffer from delayed treatment, poor treatment outcomes, and repeated unnecessary visits to the ED that can lead to unnecessary costs on both the patient and hospital.

Objectives

• The primary objective of this project is to develop a work-flow model that would elucidate opportunities for collaborative practice encouraging seamless patient transitions between the hospital ED and the dental school.

• The secondary objective is to explore what would be necessary to create an interprofessional learning opportunity where health professions students can work as a team involving the referral, coordination, and transfer of patients from the ED to the dental school.

Methods

• Key faculty and staff from several departments including Emergency Medicine, Hospital Dentistry, School of Dentistry and Social Work were identified for focus group interviews concerning the current flow of oral pain patients seen at the Michigan Medicine Emergency Medicine Department.

• Participants were invited to two interviews that took place via Zoom and were asked questions such as:

  “What happens after a patient visits the ED for oral pain?”

  “What resources do you give the patient to help them find a place for definitive treatment?”

  “What resources do the referring ED physicians currently need to help fill in this gap of continuity of care?”

  “Do you believe there is potential for a collaborative IP team to help with an internal work-flow for these patients?”

  “Do you believe there is potential for a collaborative IPE team to help with an internal work-flow for these patients?”

• All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the research team.

• Data analysis included the research team identifying key ideas to help establish a possible work-flow model for how a patient can best be transferred from a hospital Emergency Department to a dental home at the School of Dentistry.

Lessons Learned

• There is a big gap in the post ED visit continuity of care as it pertains to patients who present with oral pain to the ED.

• ED physicians and hospital social work are unaware of how patients become patients at the UMSoD.

• There is a need for a simplistic referral system from the ED to the UMSoD.

• There is the need for the development of a "Dental Navigator."

• This "Dental Navigator" could be a team of dental, dental hygiene, medical, and social work students overseen by an IP faculty team.

Future Application and Next Steps

April 2021:

• Interview past patients who have been in this cycle to identify patient concerns.

• Develop the role and responsibilities of the "Dental Navigator".

April-May 2021:

• Create an interdepartmental referral system for the ED physician to refer to the “Dental Navigator” at the dental school and finalize the hypothesized work-flow. (Figure 1)

June 2021:

• Pilot the work-flow with real patients.

July 2021:

• Assign the “Dental Navigator” Team Faculty who will oversee the work-flow and help teach the students about patient advocacy and dental care navigation at the dental school.

August 2021:

• Assess and correct gaps in the pilot.

September 2021:

• Develop an IPE educational opportunity/rotation for dental, dental hygiene, medical and social work students to be register for participation in this IPE opportunity.

December 2021:

• Apply for funding to follow the patients in order to gather outcome data.

April 2021:

• Report early outcome data at HPE day 2021.

Acknowledgments

• We would like to acknowledge those who participated in the focus group interviews; Dental School Faculty: Dr. Mark Fitzgerald, and Dr. Patti Doerr. Adult and Pediatric ED Faculty: Dr. Joseph House, Dr. Brenden Munzer, Dr. Sarah Tomlinson. Social Work: Karen Burnett, Katie Schneider, and Jennifer Tyrell.

• We would also like to acknowledge our IPE Cohort for their support and feedback of this project.

• And finally, Tazin Daniels and Vani Patterson for their constant push and encouragement – with out it, we would not be here.