



Research Brief

The Relationship Between Health Behaviors and Emergency Department Visits and Hospitalizations after Traumatic Spinal Cord Injuries

The objective was to identify demographic, injury, and behavioral predictors of emergency department visits and of emergency department -related hospitalizations among individuals with chronic traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI).

Key Findings

- During the study period, 41% of participants reported having at least one ED visit and 21% participants reported hospitalization after emergency department visit in the past 12 months.
- High use of prescription medications, prescription medication misuse, and lack of planned exercise were associated with greater odds of at least one emergency department visit and at least one emergency department related hospitalization, while smoking was only associated with emergency department visits.
- Significant relationships were found between race-ethnicity and both emergency department visits and conditional emergency department hospitalizations. Non-Hispanic White participants were 9% less likely to report an emergency department visit. However, among those who had at least one ED visit, non-Hispanic Whites were 10% more likely to have an emergency department hospitalization.

What does this Mean?

There clearly is a socioeconomic and racial ethnic component to both emergency department visits and hospitalizations, with those having higher income having better outcomes. The findings suggested that other participants, primarily non-Hispanic Blacks, were more likely to use the emergency department for treatment for less severe conditions that did not require hospitalization.

As individuals age, both based on chronologic age or years postinjury, there is a greater risk of hospitalization following an emergency department visit. This may be an indication of more serious conditions and greater vulnerability to long-term adverse outcomes.

All these factors should be considered when developing treatment plans and the presence of extensive use of prescription medications to treat secondary conditions should be a red flag for future adverse outcomes. This research is not to be taken for medical advice. Please always speak with your healthcare provider before changing medication use or making any decisions that may impact your health.

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