



Research Brief

Emergency Department Visits, Related Hospitalizations, and Reasons for Emergency department Utilization after Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury

Introduction

People with spinal cord injury (SCI) have high rates of health care use, including hospitalization and emergency department (ED) visits. Among those who experience an ED visit, many have additional ED visits or become hospitalized. Our objective was to identify the amount of ED visits and the reasons for ED visits among people with SCI, and how it compares to the general population. We looked at demographics, injury characteristics, and behaviors that could related to ED visits and ED related hospitalizations.

Key Findings

- Thirty-seven percent of participants reported at least one ED visit, and 18% reported at least one ED hospitalization in the past 12 months.
- Among only those with an ED visit, nearly half (49%) had an ED hospitalization.
- After controlling for demographics, those with SCI were 151% more likely to visit the ED than those in the general population.
- High use of prescription medications, prescription medication misuse, and lack of planned exercise were associated with greater odds of at least one ED visit and at least one ED related hospitalization, while smoking was only associated with greater odds ED visit.
- Those with SCI had different reasons for using the ED compared to the general population.
 - In those with SCI, the reported reasons for an emergency department visit included that that the ED was the closest provider, the problem was too serious for the doctor’s office, and the individual gets most of their care at the emergency department.
 - In the general population, the most common reason reported for using an ED was because they “didn’t have another place to go”.

Conclusion

ED visits and ED related hospitalizations are high among people with SCI. Compared to the general population, the those with SCI had very different reasons for using the ED. The severity of health problems contributed to more ED visits, which emphasizes the need for people with SCI to receive better preventative care and community services.

The findings presented an opportunity for our SCI Research Team to develop a tool to identify people who are at high risk for ED visits and hospitalizations living in the community. Check your risk of an ED visit over the next 12 months by using the following risk calculator:

<https://chp.musc.edu/research/help/tools/emergency-department-visit-calculator>