WESPARK - Mental Health Resource Evaluation for Patients of a Local Community Hospital

ST. CLAIR COLLEGE
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and Innovation Department - Project Overview Database

Background

Canada is experiencing a mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with underfunded community-based services leading to long wait times and limited access, especially in rural areas like Leamington, Ontario. The Canada Health Act restricts coverage for mental health care, pushing patients in crisis to overcrowded emergency departments. Leamington's diverse population, including various ethnic groups and Indigenous communities, highlights the urgent need for culturally sensitive and comprehensive mental health resources. A study of emergency visits from January 2019 to December 2022 aims to identify trends to advocate for improved mental health services in the community.

Purpose

Erie Shores Healthcare (ESHC) in Leamington, Ontario, faces challenges with high rates of emergency department (ED) visits for mental health support due to socio-economic factors, cultural needs, and isolation. Limited community resources lead to frequent return visits, complicating patient management. A 2022 study emphasizes the importance of accurately tracking ED data to inform service planning. By conducting a retrospective chart review, ESHC aims to identify patient trends, service gaps, and training needs for staff, ultimately enhancing care and outcomes for mental health patients in the ED.

Partner Information

Erie Shores Healthcare is a 72-bed hospital focused on compassionate, patient-centered care and research. Due to limited community mental health resources, it has become a primary option for residents facing mental health challenges, resulting in frequent visits to the emergency department for related issues.

Outcomes

The study analyzed 3,459 emergency department (ED) visits for mental health issues at Erie Shores Healthcare from January 2019 to December 2022, involving 2,494 individuals with a mean age of 40.4 years. Most patients were male (56.6%) and primarily spoke English. Common diagnoses included unspecified anxiety disorder (37.1%) and depressive episodes (11.8%). Notably, 80% were discharged to their homes, highlighting the need for robust community support to facilitate recovery and prevent repeat visits. Community resources were found to be limited, with only one walk-in program and significant transportation barriers. The findings underscore the necessity for enhanced local mental health services and tailored interventions to address the specific needs of Leamington residents.

AT A GLANCE

- 1 Researcher and 1 community partner analyzed mental health trends in emergency room visits.
- This process was supported by 2 Student Researchers throughout the project.

PARTNERS