Community Health Worker Home Visits for Geriatric Patients in Primary Care: An Impact Evaluation

Nyann Biery, MS, Brenda Frutos, MPH, and Lynn M. Wilson, DO
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pa.

INTRODUCTION
- Community health workers (CHWs) can play a vital role in linking patients with community resources.
- MDTs that consisted of a nurse care manager, clinical pharmacist, and CHW were deployed in 6 primary care offices to perform home visits for geriatric patients (aged 60 or older) with complex needs.
- After more than 3 years of implementation, CHWs performed nearly 1,700 home visits among patients.
- This program evaluation focused on the impact of CHW home visits in geriatric patients’ health care.

METHODS
- A one-group pretest-posttest evaluation of health care utilization was performed using data retrieved from the electronic medical record.
- ED visits and hospitalizations were measured 6 months pre-enrollment and 6 months post-enrollment in patients with CHW home visits (n=355).
- Telephone interviews were conducted with patients (n=11).
- Emerging themes were identified from telephone interview transcripts.

RESULTS
- The cumulative number of ED visits and hospitalizations decreased by 18.9% and 5.8%, respectively, throughout the 6-month post-enrollment period.

DISCUSSION
- MDTs with CHWs that perform home visits in geriatric primary care patients can potentially be linked to reduction in health care utilization.
- Through CHW home visits, the patient’s environment and non-medical needs can be taken into consideration for care planning and primary care delivery.
- Most patients were satisfied with CHW home visit services. They recognized the CHW’s compassion and time devoted toward care delivery.

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