A Retrospective Analysis of Service Delivery by the North Central Health District Oral Health Program, FY2013- FY2015

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ABSTRACT

A retrospective analysis of NCHD Oral Health service delivery data was performed on data provided to the GA DPH for five focus areas. The focus areas included the race and gender of the participants, pay categories, number of new admissions/patients, the diagnostic and preventive services performed, and the number of educational programs delivered.

RESULTS

- The number of sealants placed decreased 56.8% (220-125) from 2013 and 2015.
- Total of 425 new admissions of children, ages <1 to 19, in FY 2013; 221 new admissions in FY 2014; and 205 new admissions in FY 2015.

DISCUSSION

The data for NCHD oral health program indicates an overall decrease in the number of children receiving dental care and oral educational programs. However, the reasons for this trend are a complex combination of limited financial and human resources, oral health infrastructure within county NCHD county health departments, and competing, transient, oral health service providers (per conversations with NCHD oral health staff).

CONCLUSION

Dental caries is the most common chronic childhood illness in the United States. More that one-quarter of children have tooth decay before entering kindergarten, and by age 19, sixty-eight (68%) percent of children and adolescents will have experienced tooth decay. It is the recommendation of the researcher that the NCHD consider leveraging its existing resources to integrate oral health and primary care, consider increasing the oral health workforce, improve public health access to clinical oral health care, and use its existing data to improve oral health outcomes.

METHODS

A retrospective analysis of NCHD Oral Health service delivery data was performed on data provided to the GA DPH for five focus areas. The focus areas included the race and gender of the participants, pay categories, number of new admissions/patients, the diagnostic and preventive services performed, and the number of educational programs delivered.

The data was provided by the NCHD Oral Health Department (educational programs) and the GA DPH (clinical and fiscal) in ACCESS files for FY2013-FY2015. Excel software was then used to graph and provide a descriptive analysis of the data.

INTRODUCTION

Dental (Oral) diseases are a major health concern affecting almost every person in Georgia, and as most oral diseases are preventable, the Georgia Department of Public Health’s Oral Health Program seeks to promote and implement preventive measures for all of Georgia’s citizens. For children, priority treatment is given to children who need emergency dental services because of pain or infection, and who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Meal Program (185% Federal Poverty Level).

Basic dental treatment services includes exams, cleanings, dental sealants, fillings, crowns, and extractions, when feasible. Per the Burden of Oral Health in Georgia report, Georgia lags behind HP2010 objectives in several oral health indicators, has documented oral health disparities, and a limited workforce pipeline with only one dental school and fourteen dental hygiene programs in the state (GA Dept. of Public Health, 2014). Within the NCHD, the only three public health dental clinics are in Bibb County. The percentage of children receiving public health insurance ranges from 29.8% (Twigs County) to 51.8% (Bibb County) with a District-wide average of 42.7%. The ratio range of population to dentists is 2,060:1 (Wilkinson County) to 9,600:1 (Jones County). Three counties- Crawford, Hancock, and Twiggs- do not have a dentist.

With acknowledgement of this background, the leadership of the NCHD requested a retrospective analysis of its oral health program to provide a baseline for discussions of community health improvement, possible funding priorities, and to develop strategic directions for priority health concerns.