

Wait Time in Canadian Emergency Department

Name

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Date

Introduction

Over the years, Canadian health care system has faced numerous challenges that can be explained to have hindered efficient and effective delivery of health care services. Among others, some of these challenges comprises of; long wait times in the health system, increased aging population that has resulted to increased need for healthcare services aimed for the elderly, and increasing costs of healthcare services. This paper focuses on the topic of wait time in Canadian emergency departments with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of the measures that have been adopted in order to address the challenge. Nevertheless, before delving into the effectiveness of the measures that have been adopted in order to address the challenge of long wait time in Canadian emergency department, the paper first provides a background of the issue.

Background and context

Definition of long wait time in Canadian emergency department

Wait time mainly starts the moment a patient walks through the doors of the emergency unit and ends at the moment the patient is attended to which implies that the patient has to either be discharged home or end up been admitted.

Causes of the long wait time in the Canadian emergency department

As far as the reasons as to why the wait time in Canadian emergency department is long, it can be pointed out that various reasons have been put forward to explain the long wait. Among others, the main reason entails lack of enough emergency department physicians. Indeed, as pointed by The Collaborative Working Group on the Future of Emergency Medicine in Canada (2016), the findings of the study undertaken by the group showed that as far as the Canadian

healthcare system is concerned, there is a deficit of 478 emergency physicians with the deficit expected to increase to at least 1071 by year 2020.

The other cause of long wait time can be explained to entail shortage of family physicians since the fact that families that do not have a family doctor visits emergency department across Canada even though their health conditions are non-urgent implies that the number of patients seeking emergency care from the department increases resulting to increased delay.

Finally, even though shortage of family physicians is undoubtedly a major cause for the increased wait time, it is also important to explain that economic factors also contribute to the increased wait time in Canadian emergency departments. The reason why that is the case is due to the fact that the funding model that is used when it comes to funding hospitals implies that funds are allocated according to past expenditures. As a result, hospitals that do not have huge expenses end up receiving small funds even though in reality, they might have minimized their expenditures. Consequently, such hospitals are left at a position where they are not able to increase their resources which they could use to address the issue of increased wait times.

Discussions

The issue of long wait time in Canadian emergency departments has been experienced for a long period of time. As a result, various measures have been put in place by the relevant stakeholders with the aim of reducing the wait time in Canada's emergency department. In this part of the paper, the measures that have been adopted in attempts to reduce the number of wait time in Canada's emergency department are discussed. Thereafter, the extent to which these measures have been effective in reducing the number of wait time in the emergency department will be analyzed.

Measures adopted to reduce wait time in Canada's emergency departments

From a review of various researches conducted by various scholars (Sayah, Rogers, Devarajan, Kingsley-Rocker, and Lobon 2014; Willoughby, Chan, and Strenger, 2010) on the issue of wait time in Canada's emergency departments, it is clear that the main measures that have been adopted to address the issue have involved lean management approach where the processes in place in various emergency departments across Canada have been reviewed and in some cases modified with the hope that the lean management approach will reduce the wait time in the emergency departments.

In addition to the implementation of the lean management approaches in the emergency departments of different hospitals across Canada, it can also be pointed out that other measures have been adopted in attempts to address the issue. Among others, some of the other measures adopted comprises of increases in staff working in different emergency departments across Canada, and encouraging those who can access other healthcare services apart from seeking emergency services to do so. For example, there have been efforts to sensitive Canadians on the need to have family doctors and seek their services rather than visit emergency departments across Canada when they happen to be in need of healthcare services.

Effectiveness of the measures adopted to address the issue of long wait time in Canada's emergency department

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, various stakeholders across Canada have over the years implemented various measures that are aimed at reducing the wait time in Canada's emergency departments. However, the question as to whether the various measures adopted have been effective or not has been a highly debated issue since on one hand, there are those who are of the view that the measures have been effective in addressing the issue while on the other hand, there are those who are of the view that the measures are ineffective.

In order to make an informed decision on whether the measures adopted have been effective or not, it is ideal to review the findings of some of the studies that have been carried out in the past and have focused on the topic. One of such studies is the study by Vermeulen et al. (2014) which sought to investigate the impact that the lean process improvement program that have been embraced in various emergency departments across Canada have had on the wait time. From the study, the scholars found that even though it is indeed a fact that lean management processes have been embraced in various emergency department and have had some positive impacts when it comes to reducing the waiting time, the measure has not had the desired impact. Likewise, the same view has also been expressed by The Collaborative Working Group on the Future of Emergency Medicine in Canada (2016) since from the study undertaken by the group, it was found that the wait time is likely to increase in the foreseeable future. In that perspective, it can be concluded that the measures adopted have not been effective since the desired levels of wait time in various emergency departments across Canada are yet to be achieved.

Conclusions

In conclusions, it can be pointed out that there is sufficient evidence to show that the issue of wait time in Canada's emergency department is yet to be effectively addressed. In that perspective, it is suggested that all the concerned stakeholders need to come together and put in place measures that are going to ensure that the issue is addressed once and for all. To begin with, any measures adopted have to ensure that there are sufficient physicians in the emergency departments to attend to all patients. On the other hand, measures could be put in place to ensure that most of the people coming to the emergency department get clearance from their family

doctors first since such a measure would see a drastic decline in the number of people going to the emergency departments thus reducing the wait time.

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