Abstract

In the spring of 2020, schools were forced to close due to COVID-19, the School-Based Health Centers (SBHC). Many SBHC’s adapted to telehealth to continue providing services to the students. Studies have demonstrated the health and educational benefits of SBHC’s. Loyola University operates a SBHC at Proviso East High School (PEHS) in Maywood, Illinois to provide an array of services. We analyzed patterns of PEHS students in their use of the SBHC prior, during, and after quarantine to provide an insight of the additional services and support that is needed.

Introduction

After schools closed in March of 2020 because of COVID-19, School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) like other healthcare providers began to adapt their services to meet the needs of the student/patient population. One option was to use telehealth when students were sheltering in place and unable to have in person visits. If services could be adapted to ensure safe, HIPAA and FERPA compliant telehealth would it meet the needs of the SBHC students during the pandemic. Using telehealth in SBHC’s has the potential to reach large student populations to address health issues as school reopen (Williams, 2021).

• Loyola University has operated a SBHC in Maywood that serves the Proviso East High School Students (PEHS) for the last twenty years. Services include Primary Health Care, Counseling, Psychological, Social Services, Medical Nutrition and Health Education. Studies have consistently demonstrated the benefit of SBHC’s on both health and education outcomes (Kolbe, 2019).
• The focus of this study is to evaluate the pandemic’s impact on student use of the School-Based Health Center. We will evaluate number and type of student visits pre-pandemic, during the school closure, and after schools reopened to hybrid and full classrooms. There is limited research on the impact and trends during the pandemic (Sullivan et al., 2021). Therefore, evaluating these trends will provide insight for additional services and support that is needed.
• SBHC’s have been identified as critical to student’s return and adjustment to school during the pandemic (Abdul-Raheem et al., 2021). Our goal is to disseminate these results for public knowledge, program planning and future grant funding.

Methods

We completed a retrospective descriptive study that analyzed the patterns of student visits with the healthcare providers at Proviso East School-Based Health Center. Studies have demonstrated the health and educational benefits of SBHC’s. Loyola University operates a SBHC at Proviso East High School (PEHS) in Maywood, Illinois to provide an array of services. We analyzed patterns of PEHS students in their use of the SBHC prior, during, and after quarantine to provide an insight of the additional services and support that is needed. Providers were defined as Primary Care or Mental Health caregivers. We used de-identified student data from EPIC, the electronic health record (EHR) used at Proviso East High School. The timeframe for our data analysis was from July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021. Our goal was to understand the change to numbers of patient care visits and if the percentage of visits to provider specialty changed.

Results

The results show an overall decrease in visits. During the pandemic, providers had to adapt their services to meet the needs of the student population. This included the use of telehealth. While visits dropped for the mental health providers, it was an effective tool for mental health. Primary Care struggled to provide care via telehealth with an 81% decrease in visits. Additional research is needed when more data is available for analysis, to understand the trends and impact of Covid-19.

Conclusion

Our results show clear impact to patient care visits as a result of the pandemic and school closure. During April, May and June of 2020 both students and healthcare providers were sheltering in place and the only option for patient visits were via telehealth. While visits dropped for the mental health providers, it was an effective tool for mental health. Primary Care struggled to provide care via telehealth with an 81% decrease in visits. Additional research is needed when more data is available for analysis, to understand the trends and impact of Covid-19.

Literature Cited


Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my faculty mentor, Amy O'Malley, for all the support and guidance she has offered throughout this research experience. Secondly, I would like to thank Betsi Burns and Ashley Williams for making this possible.