

Pediatric Access Coordinator to Improve Patient Access to Specialty Care and Decrease Health Disparity

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INTRODUCTION:

Children from lower socioeconomic status families have barriers to accessing pediatric orthopaedic care in a timely manner. To decrease health disparity for these vulnerable populations, a dedicated pediatric orthopaedic access coordinator was employed to manage timely care for children with eligible orthopaedic diagnoses at the author's institution. The primary research question was whether the addition of a pediatric access coordinator would improve access to pediatric orthopaedic specialty care?

METHODS:

This is a retrospective review of pediatric orthopaedic data from 2019-2021. The coordinator applied for state insurance for patients presenting to the emergency department who met qualifying criteria. Timely follow-up for each patient was coordinated and confirmed by the coordinator. Insurance data and clinic visits were reviewed for this period. The number of pediatric patients who were not capitated to the author's institution and who had Medicaid were calculated.

RESULTS:

Over a two-year period, state insurance was applied for by the coordinator for 1,096 patients who needed pediatric orthopaedic care. Approvals were granted for 273 pediatric patients. Approved patients included those requiring operative and non-operative care and were seen until resolution of their orthopaedic condition. Clinic appointments ranged from 2-18 visits per patient. Of these patients, 129 were non-capitated Medicaid patients. The coordinator helped the remaining 823 patients that were not approved find a pediatric orthopaedist within network within the time that was appropriate for their condition. Additionally, the coordinator generated significant revenue for the hospital.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The addition of a dedicated pediatric orthopaedic access coordinator improved access to pediatric orthopaedic specialty care for non-capitated Medicaid patients who otherwise were unable to find a pediatric orthopaedist. Helping vulnerable Medicaid and uninsured patient families navigate the health care system by applying to eligible state funded insurance programs decreases healthcare disparity by providing patients with timely access to specialty care. Ultimately, this results in a mutual benefit of improved care for the patient and a substantial amount of revenue generated for the hospital by securing appropriate state funded insurance and follow-up pediatric orthopaedic specialty care.