

Frequent users of ED's perspectives about a case management intervention in Western Switzerland

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Background:

Management of frequent users of the emergency department (FUED; ≥ 5 visits/year) is a known challenge. Studies show that case management (CM) improves FUEDs' quality of life while reducing their number of emergency department visits and associated costs. However, little is known about FUEDs' own perspectives on CM.

Methods:

This qualitative study was part of a larger study aiming to implement CM for FUED in French-speaking Switzerland. Participants were FUEDs included in the parent study, who had either completed the CM intervention or were still enrolled. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 participants (75% female; mean age=40.55, SD=12.84), randomly drawn from the parent study sample. Content analysis was performed by two researchers to assess participants' perceptions on the CM intervention.

Results:

Most participants endorsed general positive perceptions of CM. CM differed from their usual treatment by two characteristics: its holistic approach and the quality of the relationship with the case manager. Also, moral support was perceived as a main benefit. FUEDs perceived four outcomes: an increase in motivation (e.g., day-to-day life or health-related), better orientation in and interaction with the healthcare system and improved health literacy. Finally, FUEDs identified two negative aspects to the CM: few perceived benefits (e.g., not enough concrete outcomes) and

negative consequences (e.g., feeling ashamed to come back to ED). Three obstacles were identified: case manager's lack of time, COVID-19's influence (e.g., less personal contact) and uncertainty around the program (e.g., organization, aims). The personal relationship with their case manager was perceived as the main driver to positive outcomes.

Conclusions:

FUED perceived the program as useful and considered the relationship with the case manager as key for positive outcomes. Our findings also suggest ways to improve CM, such as clarifying its organization and aims.

Key messages:

- In FUEDs' opinion, the CM intervention had many positive outcomes, often relying on the relationship with the case manager.
- However, the CM intervention had also some negatives.