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Who Bears the Burden of External Injury Hospitalizations?

Poster Presented on April 13, 2018

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Yash Singh and Brittany Young's research focused on external injuries, which they define as "injuries caused by factors outside the body." In particular, they studied hospitalizations resulting from motor vehicle accidents, opioid use, and gun violence. Public policies to reduce these types of injuries (and related deaths) continue to be intensely debated across the country.

To study these issues, Singh and Young used inpatient hospital data for adults ages 18 – 34 discharged from Virginia's short-term general hospitals between 2012 and 2015. They focused on both trends in hospitalizations and the distribution of total charges. They found that between 2012 and 2015 "the rate of motor vehicle accident hospitalizations increased among uninsured patients and decreased among publicly-insured patients." In addition, they found that the opioid hospitalization rate rose for all payers, particularly for uninsured and publicly-insured patients, and that "there was a near tripling of the rate of gun violence hospitalizations for uninsured patients." In terms of charges, they discovered that the "distribution of total charges across different payer types varied for the three types of external injuries." While private insurance covered nearly 80% of motor vehicle accident hospitalizations, nearly 80% of charges for gun violence hospitalizations were attributed to uninsured patients. Charges for opioid hospitalizations, on the other hand, were the most evenly distributed among payers, with the uninsured and privately insured patients accounting for 44% each of the charges.