

THE RISE OF ED VISITS

Substance Abuse, Mental Illness,
and a Rise in Emergency
Department Visits: A Concerning
Trend with No Signs of
Deceleration

Prepared by Psychiatric Medical Care

- **Did you know the rate of substance abuse-related emergency department visits is steadily increasing with no signs of slowing down?**
- **Can your emergency department benefit from a comprehensive approach to substance abuse-related mental illness?**

Recent studies have shown a concerning trend in substance abuse and mental illness – an increase in emergency department (ED) visits related to substance-abuse-induced mental illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that substance use disorders affect tens of millions of Americans, with nearly 22 million adults struggling with substance use disorder in 2018 alone (SAMHSA, 2021). Mental illness is also highly prevalent in this population, with up to 46% of people living with a substance use disorder suffering from mental health issues (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020).

Given the increasing rates of substance abuse and associated mental illness, it comes as no surprise that substance abuse-related ED visits have also increased. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that substance abuse-related mental crises accounted for 1.9 million ED visits in 2017 alone – an 82% increase since 2005. SAMHSA also reports that substance-related ED visits comprised 10 percent of all ED visits nationally, with the highest rate being seen among adolescents aged 12–17, followed by individuals between the ages of 18 and 25.

Alarming, the rate of substance abuse-induced emergency department visits is showing no signs of slowing down, with SAMHSA estimating that substance use disorders could account for 3 million annual ED visits by 2025 (CDC, 2020).

These findings suggest the need for a comprehensive approach to substance abuse-related mental illness that includes preventative strategies to reduce substance use rates, increased access to quality treatment services for those already suffering from substance use disorders and mental health issues, as well as follow-up care and monitoring of individuals at risk for relapse or further health complications. Without such interventions, emergency departments will continue to be overwhelmed with substance abuse-related visits.

Therefore, it is imperative for emergency departments across the U.S. to collaborate with mental health partners to institute innovative models of care for substance abuse-related mental illnesses. This includes integrating interdisciplinary teams of mental health professionals to address the complex needs of this population and help reduce the number of substance abuse-related emergency department visits. Without targeted interventions, both short-term and long-term consequences — ranging from increased acute healthcare costs to substantial social harms — are likely to occur.

The long-term repercussions of substance abuse-induced mental illness can be dire. Not only does it place an immense burden on both the individual and their families, but it also strains our healthcare system overall. Taking proactive steps to address substance abuse-related mental health disorders now will help reduce their impacts on public health in the future.

In conclusion, substance abuse-related mental illness is a growing problem with far-reaching impacts on individuals, families, and communities. To address this issue, we must prioritize substance abuse treatment and the integration of mental health services that can provide early intervention, prevent further harm, and reduce the volume of ED visits related to substance abuse-induced mental illness. By doing so, we are taking steps toward providing greater access to quality mental health care for those experiencing substance use disorders and mental illness, while freeing emergency departments from the excessive cost and burdens related to ED visits from this populace.

Your hospital can benefit from Psychiatric Medical Care's (PMC) inpatient management services.

Our hospital partner management services include:

- Reducing risk associated with lack of inpatient mental health services
- Reducing readmissions
- Providing valuable mental health services to meet the needs of your community
- Reducing throughput time for busy emergency departments
- Providing behavioral health resources for de-escalation for your hospital and emergency department

PMC's management structure provides:

- Clinical/operational oversight of the behavioral health program
- 24/7 on-call operational support
- Adherence to national standards and best practices
- Compliance with federal requirements for key staff members
- Core measurement of success management
- Development and maintenance of quality indicators for KPIs
- Environment of care GAP analysis
- Growth and outreach planning, execution of the plan, and evaluation
- Oversight of behavioral health policy processes
- Policy and procedure GAP analysis
- Provide an inpatient toolkit filled with best practices and processes
- Recruitment/supervision of key personnel, including Program Director (RN), Medical Director, Social Workers/Therapists, Recreational Therapist, and a Growth & Outreach Manager



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ABOUT PMC

Psychiatric Medical Care (PMC) works to improve access to behavioral healthcare in communities like yours.

Our founder and Chief Medical Officer, James A. Greene, M.D., developed PMC with the sole mission of improving the function and quality of life for patients living in underserved communities.

Our clinical leadership team consists of some of the country's most knowledgeable and recognized mental health leaders. We offer extensive support to our hospitals and partners, including recruiting, training, and education for each clinical function.

If you are interested in learning more about PMC and how your hospital could benefit from our partnership, contact us today.



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