

An Analysis of User and Non-User Populations of Student Health Services at the University of Connecticut

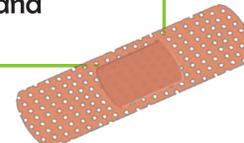
2013

Purpose of the Research

This exploratory study was initiated to better understand student experiences regarding their perceptions of and interactions with Student Health Services

Hypothesis: Students lack awareness of the services and programs available to them by SHS, resulting in lower usage

Variables: demographic information, insurance, satisfaction, perception, reputation and medical needs



Review of the Literature

According to the American College Health Association, health centers are designed to promote and maintain both mental and physical health in an effort to help students' progress through their academic experience.

- Little definitive information is known about the individual utilization rates of college and university health centers across the country
 - Studies have shown that utilization can vary by gender, mental vs. physical health services and perception
- Students who view facilities as unable to meet their needs often seek off-campus services

Core Services at UConn include Urgent Care, Allergy Clinic, X-Ray, Primary Care, Immunizations, In-Patient, Women's Health, Pharmacy, Counseling and Mental Health, Nutrition, Laboratory and Overnight Care

Methodology

This assessment was a mixed methods study utilizing quantitative data from survey results, qualitative data from open-ended survey questions, and focus group sessions

Participants

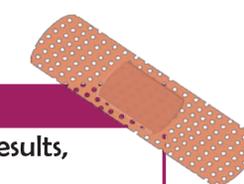
- All currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students on the UConn Storrs campus were invited to participate in a quantitative survey via email (N=21,685)
- 1,519 students completed the survey for a confidence interval of 95% +/- 3% margin of error
- 14 students participated in 4 focus groups

Collection

- The survey instrument utilized 42 questions adapted from existing surveys
- Qualitative data was gathered through focus groups and individual survey responses (29,982) to open ended survey questions

Analysis

- Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross tabulation
- Qualitative data
 - Focus group transcriptions and open-ended survey questions were coded by at least 2 researchers utilizing open coding methods



Results and Findings

- 92% of students were not concerned about the cost of services at SHS
- 85% of students have a positive view of SHS
- 68% of students agree that SHS meets their healthcare needs
- 63% of students wait until they return home to receive non-emergency care
- 59% of students believe that SHS facilities can adequately serve the needs of students at UConn
- Students are concerned about appointment wait times, building organization, parking, hours of operation, privacy, staff qualification and the quality of care at SHS

Users

- Male and female students utilize the same top 6 services
- 75% indicated they would utilize SHS again if they had a medical need

Non-Users

- 61% indicated they would utilize SHS in the future, if they had a medical need
- 80% indicated they have not utilized SHS simply because they have not needed the services

Conclusions

- Many students lack awareness about services offered at SHS
- Race, gender, academic class standing and transfer status do not affect usage and satisfaction
- If students have a need to seek healthcare services, they are doing so both on and off campus
- The farther students live from campus, the more likely they are to use SHS
- Many students do not seek information until they need it
- Lack of awareness about insurance, hours, and services may lead to lower usage

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for UConn

- Does reputation influence satisfaction?
- Why were students more aware of some services than others?

Recommendations for Other Institutions

- Research user and non-user populations of Student Health Services

Recommendations for Future Practice

- Develop new, or improve existing methods of communication to reach students
- Provide extended hours in evenings and/or weekends
- Provide more transparent information about insurance practices prior to student appointments
- Mimic check-in, administrative procedures and preliminary evaluations found in modern healthcare facilities
- Re-evaluate privacy procedures
- Continue to solicit feedback in post-visit surveys
- Display professional credentials of staff members

Limitations

- Twice as many females took the survey than males, which does not accurately represent the UConn student population
- Fewer focus group participants than anticipated
- Some survey questions unintentionally measured multiple variables