Baltimore City Health Department, CRISP, HCAM, and Community Partners Pilot ED Referral Program Connecting Pregnant Women to Support Services

Healthcare Access Maryland (HCAM), Mercy Medical Center, the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD), and Chesapeake Regional Information System for our Patients (CRISP) launched an automated referral program, powered by ENS®, to identify and connect pregnant women seen in the ED with care coordination and community resources.

Background and the Need

Adequate prenatal care is crucial for reducing pregnancy and childbirth complications and preventing adverse birth outcomes. Research shows that when women lack access to prenatal resources such as home visiting, mental health and substance use treatment, food benefits, and safety planning, the fetal and infant mortality risk increases five-fold.[1]

The BCHD estimates that between 15-30% of eligible pregnant women in Baltimore City lack referrals to prenatal care coordination and support services. A previous pilot program recognized the potential of screening women in the ED to identify those lacking prenatal referrals and linking them to the City's central care coordination unit. The current project, launched in October 2017, is a joint effort by Mercy Medical Center, the BCHD, Amerigroup MCO, and CRISP to automate and streamline the referral process and connect pregnant women with care coordination services via Healthcare Access Maryland (HCAM).

> "It is extremely important that pregnant women are connected to services like WIC, and other social supports as early as possible in their pregnancies. Improving access to such programs not only promotes a healthy pregnancy, but it helps lay the foundation for a healthy first year. It also serves to help eliminate health disparities, a key mission of BCHD."
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> Dr. Leana Wen | Baltimore City
> Health Commissioner

Current State

In the current program, CRISP identifies eligible patients by screening lab feeds for positive pregnancy tests and sending a notification when a patient is both pregnant and has insurance with a Medicaid MCO. When an eligible patient is identified, an alert is sent to HCAM via the Encounter Notification Service® (ENS®), a care coordination platform developed by Audacious Inquiry. The ENS notification triggers triaging events, both within HCAM and the patient's MCO, that result in the patient's connection to prenatal care services in the community. During a 2018 pilot study, this automated referral program contributed to significant increases in patients referred to HCAM, 83% of whom had no previous documentation of prenatal care.

The Benefit

To the Patient

- Through HCAM, women are connected to primary health and dental care, prenatal care, evidence-based home visiting services, infant safety and Safe Sleep resources, family planning counseling, and substance abuse treatment options.

- HCAM educates clients on their health benefits, helps resolve issues with providers, and links them to their managed care organization or primary care provider.

To the Healthcare System

- The program's automated referral component provides efficiency for identifying vulnerable pregnancies in the ED without the need for an in-person referral coordinator.

- Adequate prenatal care can mitigate or prevent serious adverse health outcomes for both mothers and children, leading to lower healthcare spending and improved health in the long term.[2]

[1] Bureau of Maternal and Child Health Baltimore City Health Department. (2018). Retrieved from http://www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com/uploads/files/Baltimore%20City%20FIMR%20Interim%20FY%202016-2017%20Report.pdf
[2] Kroll-Desrosiers, A., Crawford S., Moore Simas, T., Rosen, A., & Mattocks, K. (2016). Improving Pregnancy Outcomes through Maternity Care Coordination: A Systematic Review. Women's Health Issues, 26(1), 87-99. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2015.10.003.

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