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Establishing A Continuum of Care to Improve Follow-Up Rates for Survivors of Sexual Assault

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Establishing a continuum of care to improve follow-up rates for survivors of sexual assault

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Introduction
In 2011 there were over 1,000 reported survivors of sexual assault in the state of Vermont. Of those survivors who presented to the Fletcher Allen Health Care (FAHC) Emergency Department (ED), 34 were over the age of 18, and it is currently recommended that all survivors be seen by a health care provider within two weeks of their initial SANE exam to receive follow-up testing, treatment, and discuss recovery2. Less than 15% of survivors are known to attend a follow-up appointment. A published report has shown that if appointments are made before the patient leaves the ED, and support phone calls are made, follow-up rates can rise as high as 80%4.

Objective: Identify barriers for survivors of sexual assault to accessing follow-up medical and psychosocial care after undergoing a SANE exam.

Material and Methods

Data Analysis
- Responses from the thirteen interviews were compiled and analyzed
- Conclusions and recommendations were made based on literature review, analyzed data from SANE follow-up forms, and focused interview results.
- * SANE ED, Hope Works, Planned Parenthood, Community Health Center, Milton Family Practice, Vermont Gynecology, Comprehensive Care Clinic
- ** 1 Unpublished. 2 social workers, 1 NP, 1 RN, 1 LPN, 1 call center coordinator and 1 practice supervisor/manager

SANE programs and follow-up care for survivors of sexual assault

Review SANE data (Chittenden County)
- Received follow-up forms from SANE ED SANE program
- Analyzed data of adult (>18 y) survivors
- * See Figure 1

Conduct Focused Interview and Collect Data
- Based on SANE follow-up forms, current local organizations2 that provide care for survivors of sexual assault were identified. A standardized and focused interview was administered to fifteen individuals** from these sites.

Design Focused Interview
- Interviews designed to address core of context specific to Chittenden County.
- Conducted an interview assessing survivor transition from the ED to centers providing follow-up care.

Reference


Conclusions
- SANE programs are effective in providing consistent and comprehensive medical care, and improving psychological well being for survivors. The medical community highly values the work done by the SANE program.
- A published case report shows that follow-up appointments made before the survivor leaves the ED increase follow-up rates to ~80%. FAHC currently encourages the survivors to schedule their own follow-up health care appointment and the SANE nurses make follow-up phone calls where possible.
- Interview data indicates that most local health care providers:
  - Are not satisfied with the current system of referral for survivors.
  - Consider a follow-up appointment after a SANE exam extremely important.
  - Believe it is extremely important for SANE nurses to make follow-up phone calls to survivors.
  - Would like more training regarding care for survivors of sexual assault.
- In Chittenden county, there is currently no system to track the number of survivors who receive the recommended two week follow-up.

Recommendations
- Encourage local organizations to increase public outreach, knowledge, and resources for survivors.
- Encourage greater visibility of resources available for survivors, i.e. websites and printed materials.
- Strengthen collaboration between local organizations serving survivors of sexual assault.
- Consider allocation of additional resources to SANE nurses in order to improve communication with survivors after the SANE exam and promote greater rates of follow-up care.
- Consider changes allowing SANE nurses to assist survivors in scheduling follow-up appointments before discharge from the ED.
- Provide education for health care providers and support staff regarding trauma informed care and local resources available for survivors.

Acknowledgements

References