

4 Ways to Streamline ER Use



In a commentary published in *Becker's Hospital Review*, Chis Van Gorder, the CEO of Scripps Health highlights that emergency departments face the problem of increased load of non-emergency patients.

Despite the fact that hospitals and healthcare systems have been consistently expanding or building new emergency departments, they are still not enough mainly because the number of non-emergency visits continues to increase - by 160 percent from 2014 to 2015.

Mr. Van Gorder points out that the expansion of Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program in 2011 has pushed more patients to EDs because Medi-Cal's reimbursement rates are extremely low and very few doctors accept patients who are insured through this program. Often, waiting times for Medi-Cal patients are quite long, forcing them to opt for EDs because they are bound to get immediate care there.

See Also: [Community Paramedic Offers Solution to ER Overcrowding](#)

In order to reduce the non-emergency use of emergency departments, Mr. Van Gorder suggests the following strategies:

1. Non-emergency patients should be directed to seek treatment from their regular doctors, urgent care or other venues.
2. Hospitals should focus on improving accessibility to different treatment points such as telemedicine as well as expand their hours and location.
3. Reimbursements for Medi-Cal should increase.
4. Organisations should develop specialty care sites for patients with behavioural-health issues so that such patients can have access to psychiatric emergency treatment. Organisations should also improve the collaboration between providers, payers, government and community services with more funding.

Previous research shows that there is a tendency of overcrowding in ED usage when governments cut back on behavioural treatment services. "None of this will be easy to do," Mr. Van Gorder said. "But something must be done - and soon - because what's happening in California ERs is a public health crisis, and it's happening now."

Source: [Becker's Hospital Review](#)

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