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The nursing role in population management for pediatric patients with asthma

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According to the United States Center for Disease Control 6.3 million children nationally have asthma. Minority children from low socioeconomic backgrounds have high rates of asthma emergency visits, and hospitalizations. At Boston Children's Hospital (BCH), our urban clinic rates exceed fourteen percent (2600 patients each year). These children are primarily of African American and Hispanic backgrounds, are publically insured (75%) and live in low income communities. Nurses can provide innovative approaches to improve asthma outcomes in these vulnerable patient populations. To address needs, BCH designed a multidisciplinary team of physician and nurse practitioner champions, registered nurse, population manager, and research assistant. A population management registry was created to identify high risk patients who need enhanced care, follow up and case management. The nurse practitioner and physician provided workshops for staff and developed teaching materials. The team then bundled evidenced-based interventions for all patients. Clinic nurses studied to become nationally certified asthma educators and began telephone out-reach to patients with rising risks to review symptoms and medications, and to address barriers that lead to emergency utilization. For patients with high medical or social risks the nurse practitioner provided case management, education, clinical care, specialist referral, and worked with community agencies. Population Health Management seeks to improve health, lower costs, and ensure effective care. Our program has reduced emergency room utilization by fifty three percent and hospital admissions by forty four percent. Nurses and nurse practitioners in multidisciplinary teams are vital for implementing innovations that improve asthma outcomes for vulnerable patient populations.

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