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Missed Treatments of Hemodialysis Patients after Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico

Mercedes Harford*

Keith Norris, MD, PhD[†]

Ylene Rodriguez, RN, MPH[‡]

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[†]University of California, Los Angeles

[‡]Atlantis HealthCare, Puerto Rico

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Missed Treatments of Hemodialysis Patients after Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico*

Mercedes Harford; Keith Norris, MD, PhD; and Ylene Rodriguez, RN, MPH

Abstract

The consequences of a natural event such as a hurricane can especially have a negative impact on vulnerable patients such as hemodialysis patients. In former incidences such as Hurricane Katrina, factors such as living relocations disrupted hemodialysis patients' ability to adhere to their thrice-weekly treatments (Anderson et al, 2009). In this study, 44% of the 386 hemodialysis patients who experienced Hurricane Katrina reported missing one or more dialysis sessions. Thus, the hurricane had significant negative influence on patients' attendance at the dialysis clinic. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico suffered extensive road blockages, electricity shortages, and lacking natural resources. Recovery procedures such as clearing of roads were not completed until several months afterward. By October, there was still a significant portion of people without sufficient resources. The primary objectives of this study are to assess the percentage of hemodialysis patients who missed dialysis sessions in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the social factors influencing their missed sessions. From a total of 16 facilities, three dialysis clinics in cities most highly impacted by the hurricane will be selected to participate. Data will be collected through patient interviews, surveys, and charts, to examine potential demographic characteristics and social factors that may have affected the patients' attendance to these dialysis facilities. If there is a significant correlation between the social factors and missed treatments, then management strategies can be suggested to help hemodialysis patients adjust to post-disaster conditions and help develop planning strategies in case of future natural disasters.

KEYWORDS: dialysis; hurricane; dialysis attendance; questionnaire

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School of Public Health
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Mercedes Harford

Keith Norris, MD, PhD, UCLA

Ylene Rodriguez, RN, MPH Atlantis HealthCare, Puerto Rico

Coordinating Center: University of California, Los Angeles

ABSTRACT

The consequences of a natural event such as a hurricane can especially have a negative impact on vulnerable patients such as hemodialysis patients. In former incidences such as Hurricane Katrina, factors such as living relocations disrupted hemodialysis patients' ability to adhere to their thrice-weekly treatments (Anderson et al, 2009). In this study, 44% of the 386 hemodialysis patients who experienced Hurricane Katrina reported missing one or more dialysis sessions. Thus, the hurricane had significant negative influence on patients' attendance at the dialysis clinic. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico suffered extensive road blockages, electricity shortages, and lacking natural resources. Recovery procedures such as clearing of roads were not completed until several months afterward. By October, there was still a significant portion of people without sufficient resources. The primary objectives of this study are to assess the percentage of hemodialysis patients who missed dialysis sessions in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the social factors influencing their missed sessions. From a total of 16 facilities, three dialysis clinics in cities most highly impacted by the hurricane will be selected to participate. Data will be collected through patient interviews, surveys, and charts, to examine potential demographic characteristics and social factors that may have affected the patients' attendance to these dialysis facilities. If there is a significant correlation between the social factors and missed treatments, then management strategies can be suggested to help hemodialysis patients adjust to post-disaster conditions and help develop planning strategies in case of future natural disasters.

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