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“Study Buddies: Establishing a Hospital Tutoring Program for School-Aged Children with Prolonged Hospital Stays”

Introduction: Depending on the time of year, pediatric patients with prolonged or recurrent hospital admissions may miss substantial amounts of school. These disruptions in school attendance can cause academic stress for the patient and their families, particularly when children fall behind on coursework or have difficulty keeping up with educational needs during their time of illness and recovery. However, many hospitals have limited data evaluating the need of academic support for their hospitalized patients and the effect of these tutoring programs on patients’ academic confidence and relief of academic stress. Hospital-based tutoring programs can provide academic support, but the cost of employing education specialists may limit the availability of these programs. At Manning Family Children’s Hospital, a medical student volunteer-based tutoring program was developed to provide individualized academic support to hospitalized school-aged children.

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to perform a needs assessment related to educational resources for school-aged pediatric inpatients at Manning Family Children’s Hospital with prolonged hospital stays or frequent hospitalizations. The primary objective of this study is to assess overall stress and perceived need for academic support in school-age pediatric inpatients with a length of stay ≥ 6 days and/or multiple admissions in the last year. The secondary objective is to identify the perceived effects of the tutoring program on patients and their families. The tertiary objective is to evaluate whether perceived need for academic support varies by geographic location using zip code data.

Methods: Pediatric inpatients ages 7-18 with a prolonged hospital admission, which is defined as ≥ 6 days and/or multiple admissions within the previous year, will be identified by the on-service pediatric inpatient and rehabilitation teams. Faculty, residents, and medical students will offer the guardians of these children an opportunity to participate in our baseline survey. This survey includes the patient’s zip code, length of inpatient stay, number of school days missed in the previous year from hospitalization, and an assessment of their stress about their child’s academic needs. Regardless of research participation, all eligible children and their families will be offered the opportunity to sign up for our tutoring program. In order to evaluate the tutoring program’s ability to relieve academic stress, we will offer a post-tutoring survey to the guardians of each child who attends the tutoring program sessions. This survey will include their zip code and a few questions assessing the tutoring program’s ability to alleviate the stress related to their child’s academic needs after being hospitalized. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize participant characteristics and survey responses.