

## ABSTRACT

### USE OF UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER, FRESNO, CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AS A PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SITE BY LOW SOCIOECONOMIC INDIVIDUALS, 2000-2002

Emergency departments exist to provide medical services to acutely ill patients. Emergency departments nationwide have difficulty fulfilling their mission because their resources are strained by their use by some for primary healthcare rather than emergency care. Since 1990, the number of hospitals providing emergency care has decreased and the number of emergency department visits has increased.

This retrospective study examined the demographics of individuals who visited a large emergency department more than five times within one calendar year. The study looked at patients' age, ethnicity, number of visits, and method of payment.

Findings showed an increase from year to year in number of patients being seen and number of visits. The most common method of payment was MISP. The group with the highest number of visits was the Hispanic group, median age was 40, and gender that made the most ED visits was male.

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