Summer Studentship Proposal 2020/2021

CLINICAL PROJECT

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Brief Description of Research:

TITLE: Chronic pain in Counties-Manukau: equity of access, and equity of outcomes - 1 year impact on opioid use and specialist health service utilization

Aims:

1. To examine the demographics of patients referred to the CMH Chronic Pain Service in 2018-19, with particular focus on ethnicity and socioeconomic factors, medication usage (including opioid medications) and prior utilization of specialist health services (including admission to ED, hospital, Mental Health contacts and outpatient appointments), in order to determine equity of access (whether referrals are representative of the Counties-Manukau chronic pain population as a whole).

2. To examine the 1 year outcomes of people first seen by the CMH Chronic Pain Service after 1 year (July 2019-July 2020), including medication use and utilization of specialist health services, and whether there were significant differences between different ethnic and age groups (equity of outcomes).

The findings of this project will help to identify whether there are specific groups in the Counties-Manukau population that are under-represented in access to a specialist pain management service, which will guide future integration with community and primary health care, and identify factors that may have an impact on outcomes. This study is complementary to other quality improvement activities such as the Pasifika Pain Group currently run by clinicians from the service, and a study published last year comparing rates of access to specialist pain services by ethnicity across New Zealand.

Methodology:

1. All patients referred to the Chronic Pain Service from July 2017 to July 2018 (1 year) have been identified by DHB clinical information systems (iPM).

2. Summer student researcher will review each patients electronic clinical records and extract and record in already built Access data:
   • Source of referral (primary care practice, specialist services inpatient/outpatient)
   • Dispensed medication record at time points one year prior and one year following date of initial assessment, particularly opioids and benzodiazepines
   • Number of Emergency Department presentations, hospital admissions and length of stay, and number of outpatient specialist appointments in CMH and regional services, in the year prior to initial assessment AND in the year following initial assessment.
   • Number of CPS contacts, including groups

3. Statistical analysis of dataset, looking at both significant pre- and post- differences (measured by medication usage and service utilization), and whether different groups (especially Pasifika, Maaori and older persons) differ in their outcomes.
Skills that will be taught to the student:

- Recognition of burden of chronic pain and associated costs, including opioid use.
- Understanding evidence based multidisciplinary treatment approaches for chronic pain.
- Working with an enthusiastic, passionate team of clinicians who are committed to the best outcomes for our Counties Manukau community.
- Understanding of clinical audit processes (observational study).
- Utilization of existing datasets to determine patient outcomes and service effectiveness.
- Learning statistical analysis of pre- and post- intervention outcomes “at the coalface”.
- Understanding health equity, and the importance of health service data to identify areas of need to focus resources on.

A computer, all IT access required, and office and a desk will be provided to the summer student. It is envisaged that the proposal will be completed within the studentship timeframe. HDEC application will be completed before the study period starts. There is potential for this study to lead to publication.