Frequency, determinants, and impact of overcrowding in emergency departments in Canada: a national survey of emergency department directors

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Record Status
This is a bibliographic record of a published health technology assessment from a member of INAHTA. No evaluation of the quality of this assessment has been made for the HTA database.

Citation

Authors' objectives
The main objective of this study was to describe the frequency, determinants, and impact of emergency department (ED) overcrowding in Canada. Secondary objectives were to explore the views and perceptions of ED directors about their facility's state of overcrowding; to determine whether there are differences in frequency, determinants, and impact of overcrowding in EDs in Canada; and to explore the potential association between overcrowding and site characteristics.

Authors' conclusions
The results of this study suggest that ED overcrowding is a significant and frequent problem across Canada. It is not limited to large urban centres, nor is it limited to academic and teaching hospitals. Most ED directors perceive access block or an insufficient number of in-patient beds to be the main cause of overcrowding. They perceive that overcrowding lowers the quality and accessibility of emergency care, and increases the stress levels and turnover of ED staff. These perspectives on the problem reinforce the need for more research regarding effective policies and interventions to reduce ED overcrowding.

Project page URL
http://www.cadth.ca/

Indexing Status
Subject indexing assigned by CRD

MeSH
Attitude of Health Personnel; Bed Occupancy; Burnout, Professional; Canada; Crowding; Efficiency, Organizational; Emergency Medicine /manpower; Emergency Service, Hospital /organization & administration /utilization; Health Services Needs and Demand; Models, Organizational; Nurse's Role; Patient Satisfaction; Systems Analysis; Triage; Workload

Language Published
English

Country of organisation
Canada

Province or state
Ontario

Address for correspondence
AccessionNumber
32006000860

Date bibliographic record published
11/08/2006

Date abstract record published
11/08/2006