

Switzerland - Impact of a telephone triage service for non-critical emergencies in Switzerland: a cross-sectional study

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Overview

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Overview

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Telephone triage services (TTS) play an increasing role in the delivery of healthcare. The objective of this study was to characterize the users of a TTS for non-critical emergencies, describe the types of advice given and their subsequent observation, and assess the influence of TTS on the use of the healthcare system in a sanitary region of Switzerland.

Methods: Data from a TTS based in the French part of Switzerland were analyzed. This service consists of a medical contact center for non-critical emergencies, with trained nurses available 24/7. A random selection of 2,034 adult calls was performed between July and December 2018. Research students contacted users 2 to 4 weeks after the initial call and assessed sociodemographic and clinical data, as well as the impact of the advice received on the use of the healthcare system.

Results: A sample of 412 (22.2%) users was included in the analyses. The average age was 49.0 (SD 20.4) years; 68.5% were women and 72.8% of Swiss origin. The two main recommendations provided by nurses were to consult the emergency department (ED) (44.6%, n=184) and to contact a physician on duty (33.2%, n=137). The majority of users followed the advice given by the nurses (substantial agreement [$k=0.79$] with consulting the ED and perfect agreement [$k=0.87$] with contacting a physician on duty). We calculated that calling the TTS could decrease the intention to visit the ED by 28.1%.

Conclusion: TTS for non-critical emergencies have the potential to decrease the use of ED services.

UNITS OF ANALYSIS
412 individuals

KEYWORDS
Telephone triage, general practice, emergency medicine, delivery of health care

Coverage

UNIVERSE
Humans

Producers and Sponsors

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Name	Abbreviation	Role
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Metadata Production

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Sampling

Sampling Procedure

In this cross-sectional study, a research collaborator randomly selected calls each week from all TTS calls made during a 4-month period (July 24 to September 27, 2018, and October 23 to December 17, 2018) by using STATA software (Stata Corp 2015, College Station, Texas, USA).

Questionnaires

No content available

Data Collection

Data Collection Dates

Start	End	Cycle
2018-07-24	2018-09-27	N/A
2018-10-23	2018-12-17	N/A

Data Collection Mode

Users were contacted by phone by trained research university students (not necessary medical students) who collected the data. During the phone encounter, participants provided oral consent, after which the students recorded their answers on a secured software system (REDCap). The consent was given orally and the answer was transcribed into the Redcap form. If the answer was negative, the interrogation was interrupted. For each included participant, a research assistant also retrieved data from the TTS database that had been recorded during the initial call by the nurse. The data from the records were used for the exact date of the call and the time of the call. These data were retrieved from the registration form and added to the secure folders (REDCap) by the research assistant.

Data Collection Notes

Data Processing

No content available

Data Appraisal

No content available