



Student Health Center Response to a Crisis on Campus

Christopher P Holstege^{1,2}, Priyanka Vakkalanka¹, Nicole Ruzek²

¹ University of Virginia, Division of Medical Toxicology, Department of Emergency Medicine

² University of Virginia Elson Student Health Center



Background

- In September 2014, a university student was reported missing and presumed to be abducted.
- Over the following two months a search ensued, her remains found and her death ruled a homicide.
- The university as a whole felt the impact of a missing persons investigation and the subsequent loss of a beloved community member.
- In response, the Student Health Center (SHC) increased outreach and operations
- The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the impact of this crisis on students seeking mental health services, and identify how outreach efforts can be used to best respond to students' needs during such an event.

Methods

- SHC providers collected demographic, clinical/psychological impact and follow-up care data on students who directly expressed distress over this event
- SHC staff providing outreach services related to the event captured data relevant to the communities served.
- Data were captured in a standardized collection form and were entered into a spreadsheet for data analysis.

Results

Table 1. Summary of Student Visits (9/17-01/12)

Characteristic	Number	%
Gender*		
Female	50	72.5
Male	14	20.3
Age*		
18	10	14.5
19	18	26.1
20	11	15.9
21	16	23.2
>=22	9	13.0
Race/Ethnicity*		
Caucasian/White	50	72.5
Other	5	7.2
African American/Black	4	5.8
Asian American/Asian	3	4.3
Multi-racial	2	2.9
Hispanic/Latino	0	0.0
Visit Type*		
Phone	1	1.4
Scheduled	34	49.3
Walk-In	25	36.2
After-hours	4	5.8
CAPS History*		
First CAPS Contact	34	49.3
Returnee	25	36.2

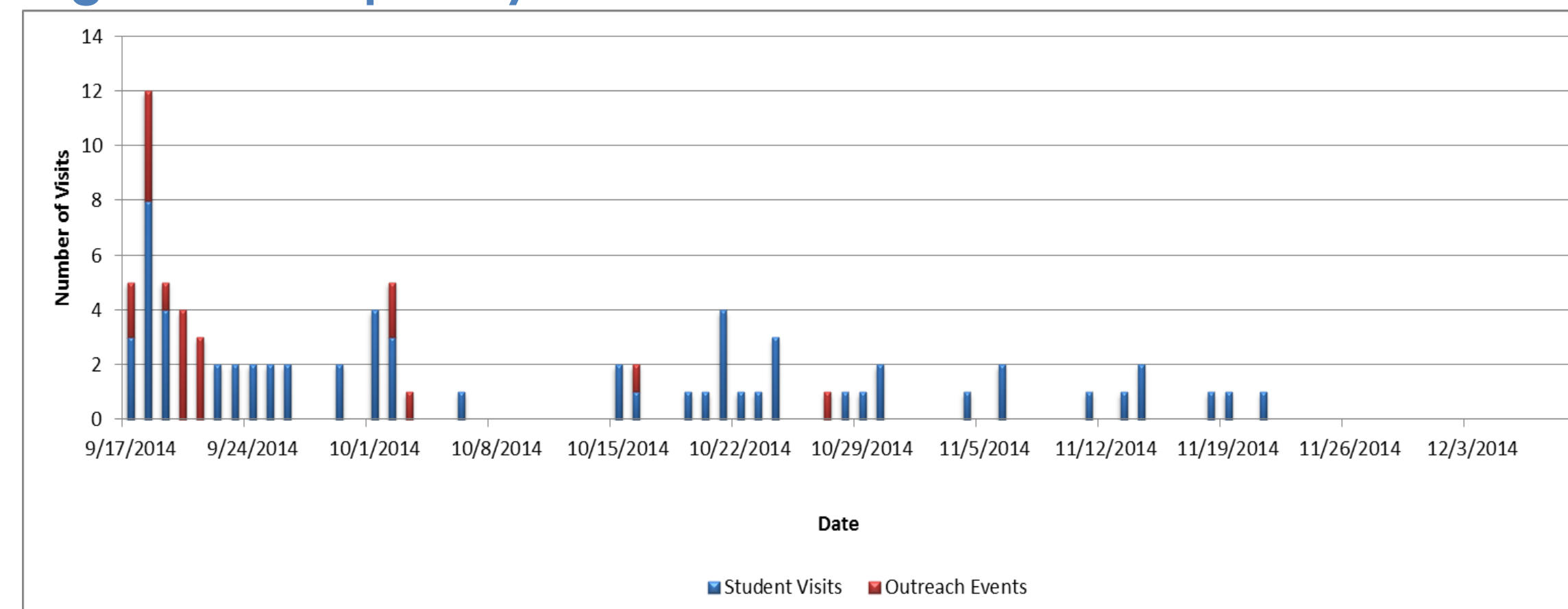
* Students only (n=69). Percents may not add up to 69 due to missing data.

- 77 visits/phone calls involved concern or were related to the crisis event [69 students, 5 family members, 3 unknown].
- Student characteristics are displayed in Table 1.
- Key clinical characteristics are presented in Table 2. Other reported impacts included: anxiety at night when walking, difficulty paying attention in class, decreased appetite, sadness, worried about a friend, diversity impact on missing student, eating/body image, existential concerns, images of found body, anti-social behavior, emotional numbing.

Table 2. Clinical Characteristics among Students (9/17-01/12)

Impact of Student Disappearance	Number	%
Academic Concerns	20	29.0
Agitation	11	15.9
Anxiety	42	60.9
Depression	29	42.0
Family Problems	3	4.3
Self Harm	3	4.3
Sleep Deprivation	15	21.7
Substance Abuse	2	2.9
Suicidal Ideation	3	4.3
Trauma	12	17.4
Other*	13	18.8

Figure 1. Frequency of Visits and Outreach Events

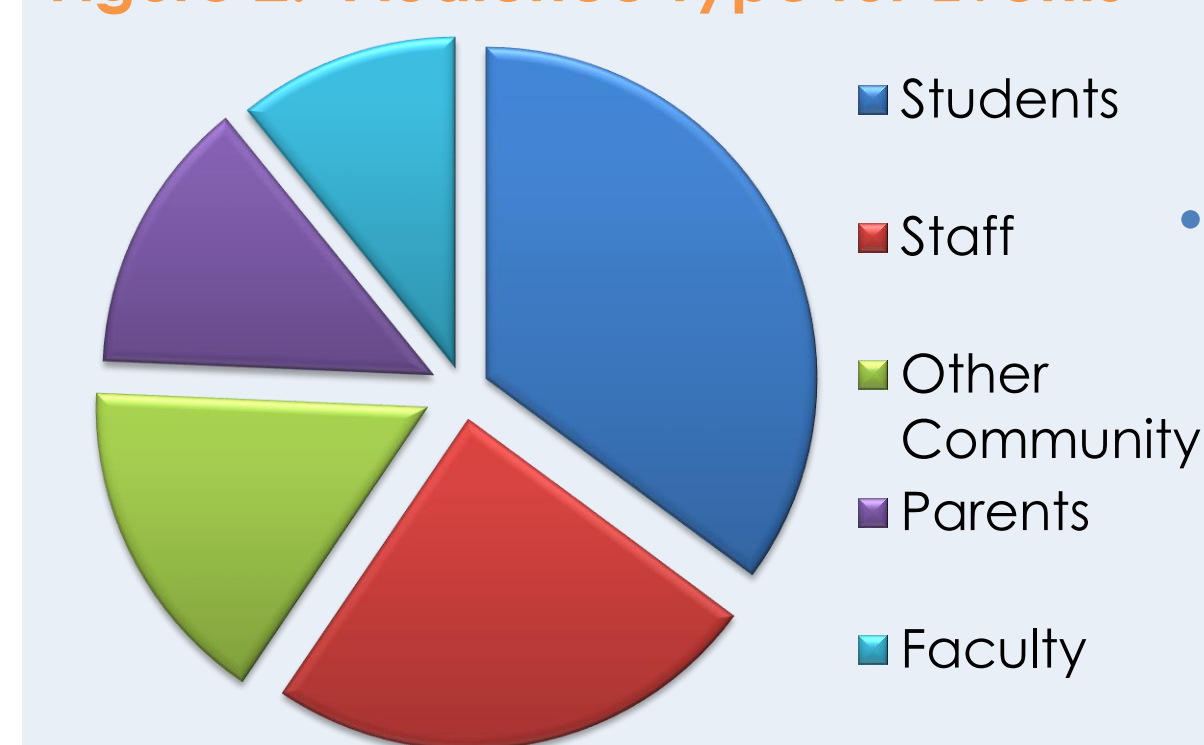


- Visits and outreach events related to the crisis primarily took place during the week following the student's disappearance and the discovery of her remains. **Figure 1**
- Approximately 68% of visits had some form of follow-up care established.

Outreach Events

- The SHC held 19 events between September 2014 and January 2015.
- Events were primarily held at the SHC, though others were held at larger venues across grounds.

Figure 2. Audience Type for Events



- Activity Types:** Additional office/walk-in hours, attending events, interventions, consultation, interdepartmental meetings
- Topics Covered:** Addressing staff and resident concerns; coping with student's disappearance; how university members can take care of themselves and others; community support; responding to disappearance; grief resources on website

Conclusion

- The SHC provided extended support during a crisis within the university community. During this time, students, staff, faculty, parents, and community members were impacted and needed additional support.
- Evaluating the key psychological concerns and populations served through surveillance and data collection equips SHC staff and administration to respond effectively to future events, while also assessing the related health impacts in the student body.