COLLEGE HEALTH SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

With over 21 million people enrolled in higher education in the U.S., college students comprise a sizable cohort of individuals in America.   Proximity to academe and the research enterprise of universities have resulted in thousands of studies of students' attitudes, behaviors and health conditions. Specifically self-reported survey data regarding their health is plentiful. However, actual clinical data from campus medical facilities is limited to single schools, or to collaborative studies about single conditions from multiple schools. Thus, there is a paucity of data regarding the epidemiology of health conditions among large populations of students who seek care in university college health services.

College Health Surveillance Network (CHSN) is a multi-institutional de-identified medical records dataset from student health centers (SHCs) at a nationally representative sample of colleges and universities that will allow the collection of medical diagnoses, services and treatments of university students and the use of this information in epidemiologic studies, service utilization studies. In recent years, the use of routinely collected secondary data from the patient electronic medical records has been increasingly recognized as a cost-efficient approach in surveillance, research, and comparative evaluation of healthcare delivery. This data source offers a number of advantages: large sample sizes, measures of health outcomes based on physicians' diagnosis, fewer problems with attrition, non-response, and measurement errors. Because of this, the Institute of Medicine and others have strongly advocated for the use of routinely collected secondary data including patient electronic medical records for surveillance and comparative healthcare research. However, this data source also has important limitations. A key limitation is related to the accuracy and completeness of recording of clinical conditions, which are dependent on diagnostic coding implemented by physicians. However, the data quality control mechanism and on-going data quality improvements ensure that measures of health outcomes from the patient electronic medical records truly reflect the health status of the population.

Founded in 2011 with initial funding support from CDC, the CHSN is the first national effort to use data from electronic medical records of students seeking care at the university student health center to evaluate and monitor the health of the college student population in the United States. As of December, 2020, a large dataset has been created containing medical records of over seven million student visits to the university student health centers from 31 member schools. These schools include five in the Northwest, twelve in the West, five in the Midwest, nine in the South. This dataset has the strong potential to be a valuable resource for student health surveillance, research, training, and informing services improvements.

https://chsn.studenthealth.virginia.edu/