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2020 County Health Rankings Tennessee Data and Updated Substance Abuse 2005-2019

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Abstract

Background: Starting in the 1990's, healthcare providers began prescribing opioids to patients as pain relievers, believing they were safe. However, many patients became addicted to these pills. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency to fight the opioid epidemic. This crisis was prevalent in East Tennessee, with many residents being prescribed opioids.

Case Presentation: The library at an academic medical center in East Tennessee analyzed the health information requests related to pain, mental health, and addiction over the last 15 years. We reviewed the pattern of requests related to these topics, the counties requesting this information, and if the hospital policies made an impact on these requests.

Conclusions: From 2005 to 2014, there were few requests on mental health, pain, and substance abuse. However, once the library moved into the hospital, there was an increase in requests on those topics. Most of the requests were on pain, with the height being in 2017, during which the public health emergency to fight the epidemic was declared. Additionally, 2017 was the time in which the hospital implemented limitations on visitors of patients with IV drug use associated infections, which might explain the drastic drop in substance abuse requests in 2018. Future outreach will target counties that have a high opioid subscription rate.