

HEALTHCARE USAGE

Overview

Individuals who are struggling with addiction may seek healthcare for a variety of reasons, sometimes for issues specifically related to their problematic use of substances. Use of the healthcare system, especially in conjunction with a primary care physician, can provide opportunities for screening, early intervention and supporting long-term wellness. In the 2016 Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health, it was noted that "effective integration of prevention, treatment and recovery services across healthcare systems is key to addressing substance misuse and its consequences and it represents the most promising way to improve access to and quality of treatment." It is just as critical to recognize the increased healthcare usage, especially with seeking acute care, when an individual is struggling with alcohol and other drugs.

Face It TOGETHER (FIT) does not focus on sobriety alone, as is the typical measurement for addiction wellness. Instead, we consider our members' social, personal and cultural capital using our Recovery Capital Index (RCI), and the risk factors that may impede the wellness journey through our Risk Assessment (RA). Since 2019, 43% of our members indicate they struggle with access to basic healthcare and 16% have recently used some type of acute healthcare service because of their issues with alcohol and other drugs.

Methodology

FIT looked at 256 members struggling with alcohol and other drugs; were engaged in coaching between 1/1/19 and 2/17/21; and completed outcome assessments at baseline and at least one follow-up. Of that group of members, 115 indicated some type of concern related to healthcare at baseline and were included in this analysis. The average number of coaching sessions completed by this group was 14 and the median was 12. Almost all (96%) struggled with healthcare access and about half (43%) had recently used healthcare because of their alcohol and other drug use. This analysis focused on the baseline and final (regardless of timing) outcome assessments – RCI and RA – for these 115 individuals. Baseline and follow-up responses were on an ordinal scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree and all metrics were scored from zero to four.

Results

Of the 115 individuals who were included in this analysis, more than half (58%) demonstrated improvement in their healthcare access at the time that they ended FIT coaching. Additionally, acute healthcare usage because of issues related to problematic use was reduced by 20% of the members. FIT member healthcare access is evaluated on three components: cost, satisfaction and having an identified primary care provider.

- At baseline, 71% did not have a primary care provider. Of those individuals, 34% had established a primary care provider by the time they ended engagement with FIT.
- At baseline, 61% were unsatisfied with their healthcare. By the time their engagement ended, 51% were more satisfied with their ability to access healthcare.
- At baseline, 45% felt that cost was a primary barrier to healthcare. At the end of their engagement with FIT, 38% of those felt cost was no longer a barrier.

Discussion

FIT addiction management coaching has a great impact on its members, including their access to and use of healthcare. According to the Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health, the integration of healthcare with addiction management services has the potential to reduce health disparities, reduce societal costs and improve health outcomes through better care coordination. Addiction is a highly complex and costly illness, and requires a multifaceted approach. FIT is exploring ways to work with the healthcare industry, including payers, to fill important gaps in addiction care and apply population health management strategies to this growing healthcare challenge. In addition to helping reduce acute healthcare utilization, FIT works to strengthen members' health outcomes by recognizing the importance of routine healthcare and open conversations with their healthcare provider. In turn, FIT's work has the potential to directly impact the quality of members' engagement with their healthcare provider, which can lead to lowering costs of care.

Figure 1: Healthcare concerns at baseline (115 members)

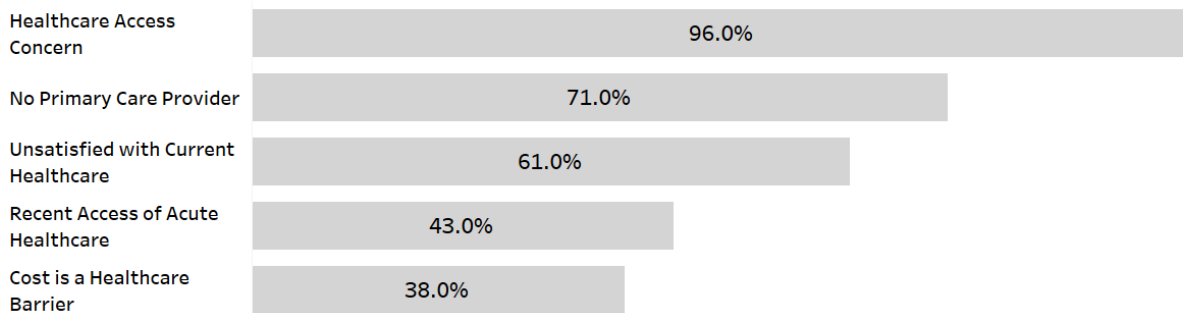


Figure 2: Healthcare improvements for members with baseline concerns

