

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE COST OF PARAMEDIC SERVICES IN SASKATCHEWAN

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INTRODUCTION

The growing importance of paramedic services to health care delivery in Canada and the lack of coverage for such care has raised concerns that those in need may not be able to access this service. As part of a larger study examining public perceptions of paramedic care in Saskatchewan, this study aimed to assess public perceptions of the costs of these services and how those perceptions affect the use of emergency services among various groups.

METHOD

Using a qualitative research design, we collected data from 56 participants in focus group sessions and semi-structured interviews. A combination of non-probability purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit key informants from different population groups (e.g., seniors, inner-city residents, rural residents, new immigrants). We conducted data collection and analysis concurrently using the thematic framework approach.

ANECDOTES

"I think the disincentive is the cost. Like if somebody has ever used an ambulance and knows how much it costs or has the knowledge about how much it costs, and then they will begin to weigh whether they should call an ambulance or whether they should just drive there."

"So, it seems to me, one thing that the facility or service can do is make it clear to the public in a general way through our journalists what the real costs are so it is not a concern. I do not know still what the charges would have been had I called the ambulance. But if I had known it would have cost nothing or little, then I might have been more accepting to give them a call."

RESULTS

- Most participants perceived the cost of paramedic services to be too high.
- There is a lack of understanding of how costs are calculated and who pays for the costs of paramedic services.
- Saskatchewan residents expect the government to do more to subsidize the cost of paramedic services.

CONCLUSION

There is a disconnect between public perceptions about the cost of paramedic services and the initiatives designed by the provincial government to alleviate these costs. There is a need for better public education about and access to government programs designed to alleviate the cost of paramedic services.

REFERENCE

Public perceptions of the cost of paramedic services. Australasian Journal of Paramedicine: 2021;18. <https://ajp.paramedics.org/index.php/ajp/article/view/889/1076>

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