Overview of emergency department visits in the United States, 2011: statistical brief #174

(PMID:25144109)
Emergency departments (EDs) provide a significant source of medical care in the United States, with over 131 million total ED visits occurring in 2011. Over the past decade, the increase in ED utilization has outpaced growth of the general population, despite a national decline in the total number of ED facilities. In 2009, approximately half of all hospital inpatient admissions originated in the
ED. In particular, EDs were the primary portal of entry for hospital admission for uninsured and publicly insured patients (privately insured patients were more likely to be directly admitted to the hospital from a doctor’s office or clinic). ED utilization reflects the greater health needs of the surrounding community and may provide the only readily available care for individuals who cannot obtain care elsewhere. Many ED visits are “resource sensitive” and potentially preventable, meaning that access to high-quality, community-based health care can prevent the need for a portion of ED visits. This HCUP Statistical Brief presents data on ED visits in the United States in 2011. Patient and hospital characteristics for two types of ED visits are provided: ED visits with admission to the same hospital and ED visits resulting in discharge, which includes patients who were stabilized in the ED and then discharged home, transferred to another hospital, or any other disposition. The most frequent conditions treated by patient age group also are presented for both types of ED visits. All differences between estimates noted in the text are statistically significant at the .0005 level or better.