

Special Healthcare Needs (SHCN) Population Under 18 Years Old at a Federally Qualified Health Center's (FQHC) Dental Department



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INTRODUCTION

Special Health Care Needs (SHCN) as defined by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) include: “any physical, developmental, mental, sensory, behavioral, cognitive, or emotional difference or limiting condition that requires medical management, health care intervention, and/or use of specialized services or programs.”

To facilitate the delivery of equitable and inclusive healthcare for patients with SHCN, providers and staff should have relevant training, accessibility models in place, and be adaptable.

PURPOSE

The **purpose** of this study is to gather data from six months of patient charts to highlight the diversity in our SHCN population and to heighten awareness of the number patients with SHCN in our dental population.

The **objectives** of the study are to measure and document the following:

- 1) How many children seen in a six-month period had one or more SHCN?
- 2) What are the most common special health care needs seen in our patient population?
- 3) To describe the impact FQHCs make in serving the SHCN community.

We **hypothesize** that 18.5% of our patient population has one or more SHCN; this statistic is concurrent with the national average of individuals under age 18 with SHCN per the AAPD.

STUDY METHODS

Study Design:
 This is a retrospective study that examines the percent of population receiving dental care at a FQHC that have SHCNs.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:
To be eligible for inclusion in this study, an individual must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Age: 0-17 years old
2. Dental visit at Tri-County Community Action Agency (TCAA) between July 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024

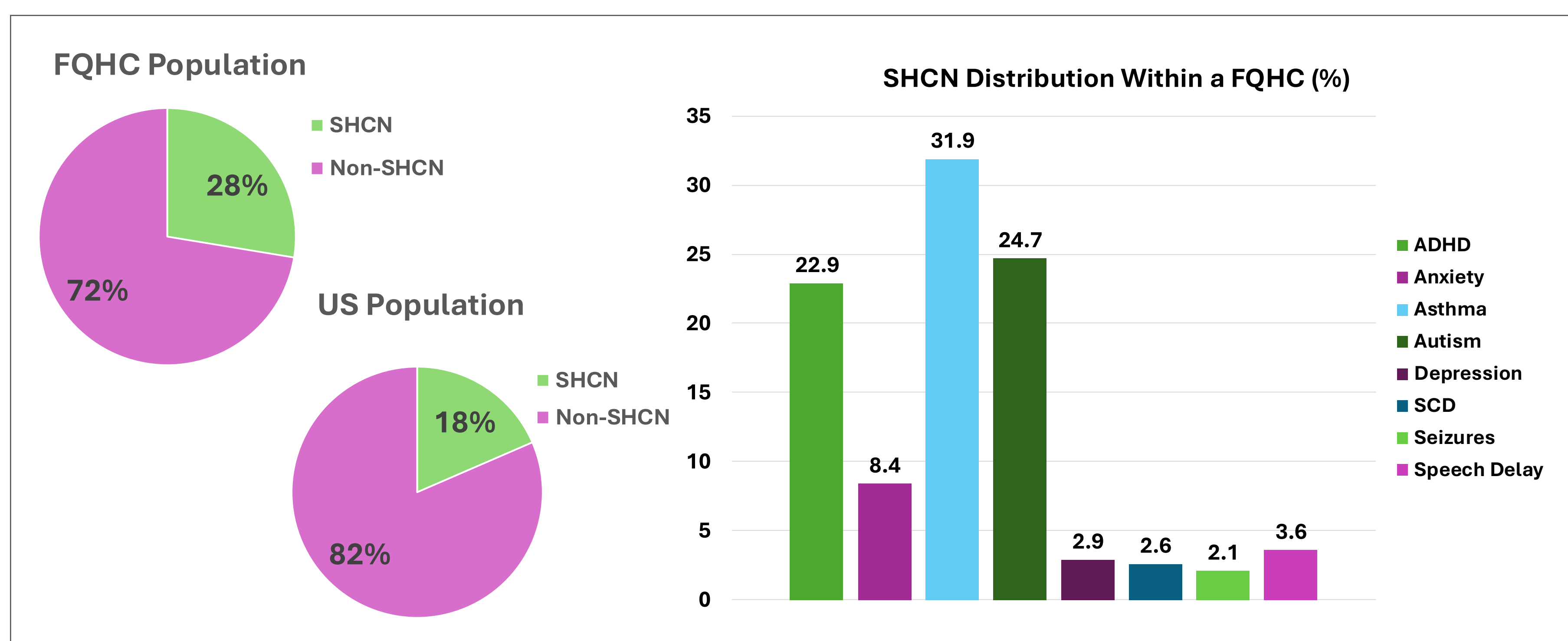
An individual who meets any of the following criteria will be excluded from this study:

1. Age: >17 years of age

Data Collection:
The following data points were collected from NextGen for research purposes:

- Full name
- Age of patient on date of service
- Special health care need, if applicable

RESULTS



- 3,233 patients were included in the research study; 699 patients having one or more SHCN. As illustrated above, 28% of patients at TCAA were found to have one or more SHCN.
- The total number of patients with SHCN (699) was used to calculate the following percentages within the SHCN patient population: Asthma (31.9%), Autism (ASD) (24.7%), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (22.9%), Anxiety (8.4%), Speech Delay (3.6%), Depression (2.9%), Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) (2.6%) and Seizure Disorder (2.1%).

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that a higher percentage of patients with SHCN are treated at an FQHC in comparison to the general US population. The patient population at a FQHC with SHCN is large and diverse; the importance of proper training and inclusivity of employees cannot be overstated. Furthermore, this study highlights the necessity of providing a safe and accessible environment for our patients – both with and without SHCN.

This study’s limitation is that the sample size came from one FQHC. However, the large sample size of 3,233 patients is a strength of the study. Further research could be carried out to have multiple study sites across the US as well as investigating the role of an FQHC in serving the needs of the adult population with SHCN.

This data has implications in education of healthcare workers at FQHCs to ensure that employees receive adequate training on how to best meet the needs of their populations. The results of this study will be used to inform the providers, staff at Tri-County Community Action Agency. Further research could examine adult SHCN populations at FQHCs.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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