

ORAL HEALTH EMERGENCY ROOM SPENDING IN FLORIDA*

AN AVOIDABLE HEALTHCARE COST

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM DENTAL CARE VISITS DRAMATICALLY INCREASING

More than 115,000 hospital emergency room visits in 2010 were for dental care with charges exceeding \$88 million. Most of it was avoidable with proper preventive care.

An analysis* of emergency room visits from 2008 to 2010 for dental conditions generally considered preventable found the number of patients seeking emergency-room dental care increased over the three years by about 10,000, and charges have increased by more than \$21 million. More than half of the increase—\$12.9 million—was to Medicaid and Medicaid Managed Care. In contrast, charges to private insurance increased by only about \$800,000. The data is a conservative estimate of the true cost of care as it reflects only a subset of the most common billing codes used to charge for dental services.

LACK OF ACCESS DRIVING EXPENSIVE EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS

Hospital emergency rooms are among the most expensive sources of dental care yet typically provide only temporary relief of the problem. Peak times for emergency room visits are during business hours, an indication of lack of access to providers willing to take Medicaid patients. While dental practices may refuse to accept Medicaid patients due to low reimbursement rates, hospital emergency rooms must treat all patients regardless of their ability to pay.

The average age of emergency-room dental patients is 32, when a lifetime of neglect may manifest as significant health issues. This situation may be exacerbated because routine dental services for adults are not covered under Medicaid. Better access for low-income patients to dental preventive and treatment service may pay for itself by reducing hospital costs and overall healthcare spending.

PUBLICLY FUNDED EMERGENCY-ROOM DENTAL CARE OF CHILDREN DOUBLED FROM 2008 TO 2010

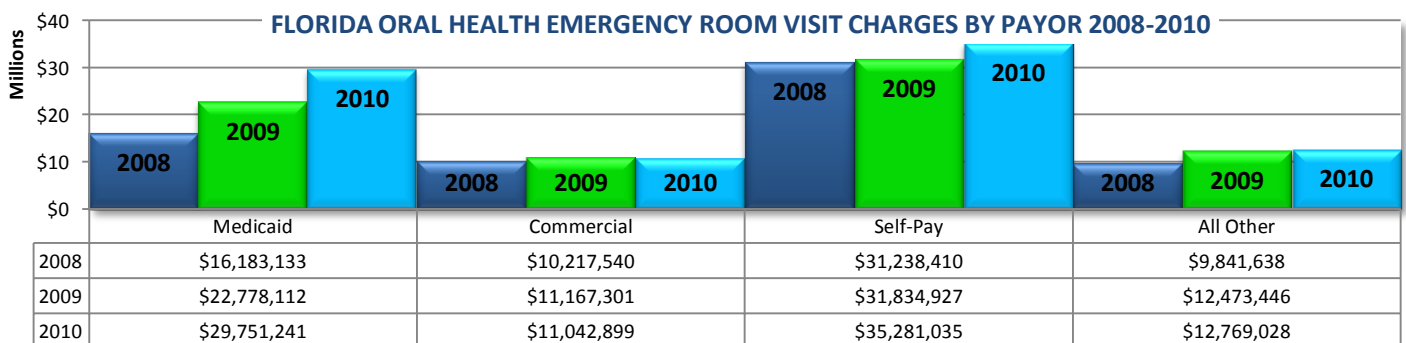
The number of visits charged to child-specific payors – KidCare, Healthy Kids, MediKids and Children’s Medical Services – more than doubled over the three years reviewed and charges almost tripled. Unlike adults, routine dental services for low-income children are covered by Medicaid and other public-payor sources. These findings may reflect a lack of community providers and the need to better inform parents—in all income brackets—of the vital importance of preventive dental care.

TOTAL ORAL HEALTH EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS BY CHILD AGE GROUP		0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	TOTAL
	2008	4,286	2,795	1,670	5,852	14,603
	2009	4,617	2,866	1,734	6,241	15,458
	2010	4,588	2,922	1,845	6,173	15,528

POLICY SOLUTIONS

The relationship between oral and overall health is well documented. As the cost of healthcare mounts, increasing access to preventive oral health services would help avoid more expensive care. Recommended policy actions include:

- ✓ Expand preventive services by dental hygienists
- ✓ Support and expand county health department dental services
- ✓ Work toward 100 percent community water fluoridation
- ✓ Expand pre-school- and school-based preventive dental services in high-risk communities
- ✓ Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for preventive and restorative dental care
- ✓ Cover routine dental services for adults under Medicaid



* An analysis of Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA) 2008-2010 Emergency Department Database – Ambulatory Care-Sensitive Dental Conditions by the Florida Public Health Institute from data collected by the Health Council of Southeast Florida.

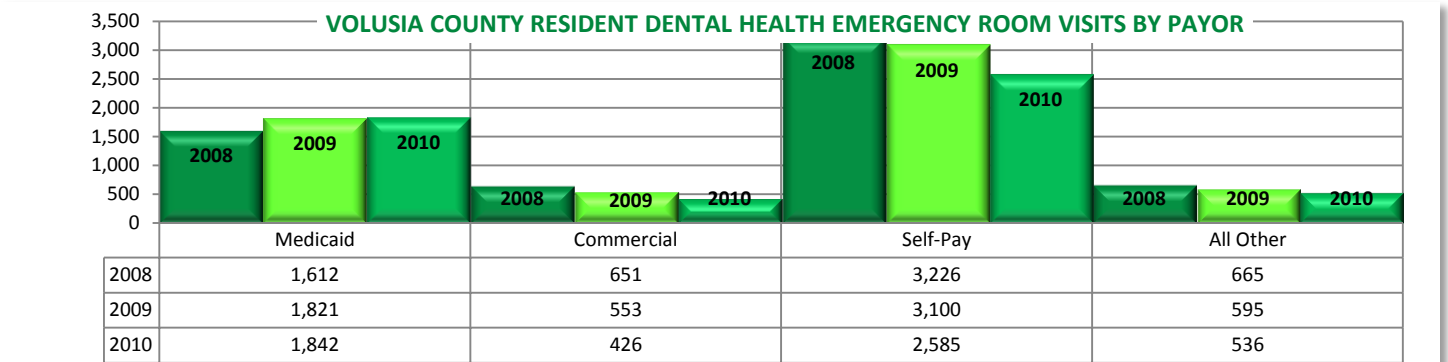
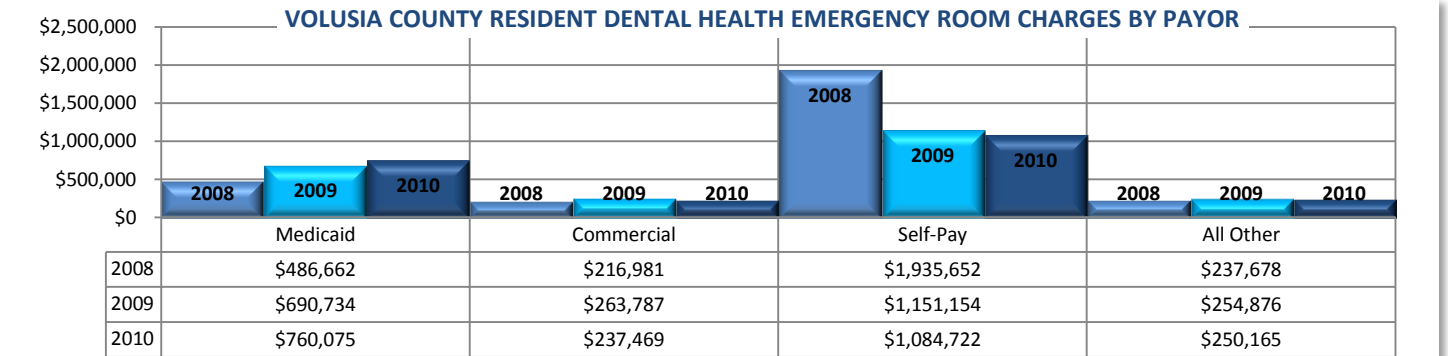
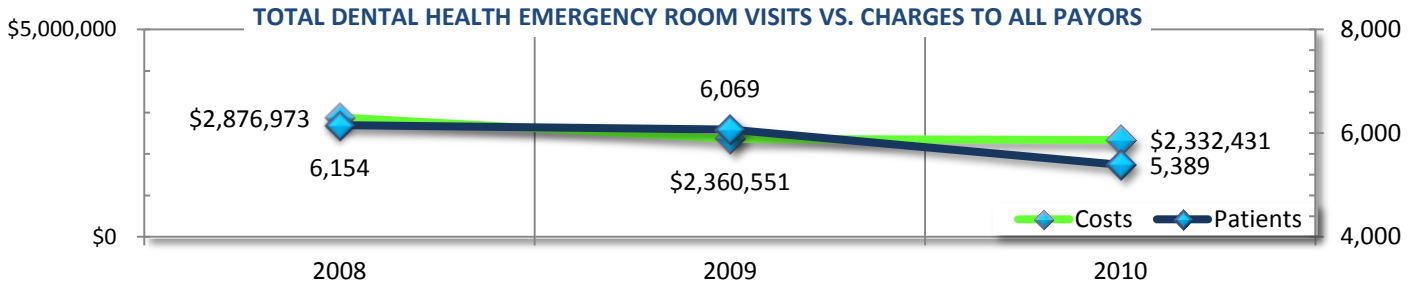
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DENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS BY VOLUSIA COUNTY HOSPITAL 2008 – 2010: ALL PATIENTS

	2008	2009	2010
BERT FISH MEDICAL CENTER	851	945	670
FLORIDA HOSPITAL DELAND	1,217	1,206	1,056
FLORIDA HOSPITAL FISH MEMORIAL	926	963	892
FLORIDA HOSPITAL MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER	656	608	630
FLORIDA HOSPITAL OCEANSIDE	527	512	396
HALIFAX HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER	1,466	1,432	1,411
HALIFAX HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER – PORT ORANGE	845	737	612

RESIDENT-SPECIFIC VOLUSIA COUNTY DATA:



ORAL HEALTH EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS BY NUMBER OF VOLUSIA COUNTY CHILDREN BY AGE GROUP

0-4		5-9			10-14			15-19			
2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010
121	171	107	136	125	104	80	71	72	316	279	260