On call paediatricians were not better than advice nurses for after hours medical advice in a general paediatric population


In a general paediatrics population, is medical advice from on call paediatricians compared with that from advice nurses associated with (1) fewer parents or guardians seeking unadvised medical care, and (2) fewer parents or guardians obtaining unadvised significant care for their children?

CONCLUSION

In a general paediatrics population, medical advice from on call paediatricians or advice nurses did not differ for number of parents or guardians who sought unadvised medical care or those who obtained unadvised significant medical care for their children.

METHODS

Design: randomised controlled trial.

Allocation: concealed.

Blinding: blinded (healthcare providers).

Follow up period: 72 hours.

Setting: a university general paediatrics faculty practice in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Patients: 1182 parents or guardians who called for after hours telephone advice from the on call paediatrician regarding their children (mean age 3 y, 55% boys). Exclusion criteria: calls not for medical advice, calls for emergency medical conditions, and calls in which the callers were unable to consent (eg, non-English speaking or not a legal guardian).

Interventions: telephone medical advice from on call paediatricians (n = 566) or advice nurses (n = 616).

Outcomes: number of participants who sought unadvised health care (ie, level of care pursued by the caller was higher than that advised by the on call paediatrician or advice nurse, such as emergency department visits when only office care or self care had been advised) and number of participants who obtained significant unadvised health care for their children, such as hospital admission, within 72 hours of the initial telephone call.

Patient follow up: 97%.

MAIN RESULTS

The groups did not differ for number of participants who sought unadvised health care or number of participants who sought and obtained significant unadvised health care for their children (table).

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OUTCOMES

On call paediatricians v advice nurses for after hours medical advice in a general paediatric population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes at 72 hours after the initial call</th>
<th>On call paediatrician</th>
<th>Advice nurses</th>
<th>RRI (95% CI)</th>
<th>NNH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sought unadvised care</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4.5% (–18 to 33)</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought and obtained unadvised significant care</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.1% (–69 to 43)</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Abbreviations defined in glossary; RRI, RRR, NNH, NNT, and CI calculated from data in article.
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**Notes**