Background

- Severe shortage of neurologists may impact the care of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS).
- Nurse Practitioners (NPs) have successfully filled the provider gaps with positive impacts on care outcomes.
- Patient satisfaction, often synonymous with quality of care, was rated similar or improved with NPs or a team (physician-NP) approach.
- Patient satisfaction with NPs and physicians working with Multiple Sclerosis patients have not been studied.

Methods

- Cross-sectional pilot study (n=60)
- Sites: two MS Centers in the Long Island region of New York.
- Tools: Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire-18 and Visit Satisfaction Questionnaire-9
- All attributes of satisfaction were compared between the physician group and the NP group using non-parametric tests.
- The visit time and the allotted time and its relationship to satisfaction scores was also analyzed.

Results

- Patient satisfaction with both types of providers were high (VSQ9 av.-81).
- All attributes of satisfaction were equal for nurse practitioners and the physicians despite the differences in their educational preparation.
- Providers spent comparable amount of time with their patients (MD mean time=25 minutes, NP mean time=26 minutes) (p=0.8).
- Encounter duration (more or less than 20 minutes) was a strong determinant of patient satisfaction (p=0.01).
- Higher satisfaction attributes noted with patients who carried the diagnosis for 10 or more years (p=0.01) or had the progressive type of MS (p=0.03).

Implications

- Patients in MS centers are equally satisfied with the care they receive from nurse practitioners and physicians.
- A collaborative team approach can improve access to care and patient outcomes.
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