Demographic and Treatment Patterns for Infections in Ambulatory Settings in the United States (2009)
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Background
- Acute infection is a common reason for seeking care in ambulatory settings, including emergency department (ED) and outpatient clinics.
- Care consists of provider evaluation, diagnostic tests to rule in or rule out other diseases, and procedures or medications.
- Choice of care settings depends upon symptom severity, access, timeliness, perceived quality, and available services.

Methods
- Data from two large surveys of ambulatory care in 2009 by the National Hospital Ambulatory Care Survey (NHAMCS) for ED encounters and the National Ambulatory Care Survey (NAMCS) for outpatient clinic visits for adults 18 and older.
- International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9) codes used to identify encounters with UTI, URI, and SSTI as primary diagnosis.
- To maximize comparability, we excluded patients who were admitted to the hospital (NHAMCS) or referred to an ED (NAMCS).
- Data analyses conducted in Stata, v. 12 (College Station, TX) using complex survey command package. T-test and Chi-squared tests used to compare outpatient vs. ED, using survey weights.

Results

Conclusions
- Significant demographic differences between settings; greater proportion of black, Medicaid, and uninsured patients seeking ED care.
- ED patients younger by an average of >10 years.
- Greater use of diagnostic resources in EDs.
- Substantial broad-spectrum antibiotic use for uncomplicated infection suggest need for stewardship.
- Sampling/coding errors could have led to over or underestimation of specific diagnoses.

Disclosures
- This publication was supported by Award Numbers UL1RR031988 and KL2 RR031987 from the NIH National Center for Research Resources. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the National Center for Research Resources or the National Institutes of Health.