

Where Are Lifesaving Automated External Defibrillators Located and How Hard is it to Find Them in a Large Urban City?

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OBJECTIVES: Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are lifesaving, but little is known about where they are located or how to find them. We sought to locate AEDs in high employment areas of Philadelphia and characterize the process of door-to-door surveying to identify these devices.

METHODS: Block groups representing approximately the top 3rd of total primary jobs in Philadelphia were identified using the US Census Local Employment Dynamics database. All buildings within these block groups were surveyed during regular working hours over six weeks during July–August 2011. Buildings were characterized as publically accessible or inaccessible. For accessible buildings, address, location type, and AED presence were collected. Total devices, location description and prior use were gathered in locations with AEDs. Process information (total people contacted, survey duration) was collected for all buildings.

RESULTS: Of 1420 buildings in 17 block groups, 949 (67%) were accessible, but most 834 (88%) did not have an AED. 283 AEDs were reported in 115 buildings (12%). 81 (29%) were validated through visualization and 68 (24%) through photo because employees often refused access. In buildings with AEDs, several employees (median 2; range 1–8) were contacted to ascertain information, which required several minutes (mean 4; range 1–55).

CONCLUSIONS: Door-to-door surveying is a feasible, but time-consuming method for identifying AEDs in high employment areas. Few buildings reported having AEDs and few permitted visualization, which raises concerns about AED access. To improve cardiac arrest outcomes, efforts are needed to improve the availability of AEDs, awareness of their location and access to them

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