

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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Evaluating Care Delivery 01

Case-Control Study of Arthritis Health Care Utilization

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Background: Arthritis and other rheumatic conditions have a major impact on the health of nearly 45 million persons in the United States and are the leading cause of disability. While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other organizations have measured arthritis prevalence using self-reported data from health interview surveys, there is increased interest in surveillance systems that can take advantage of administrative and clinical data available in managed care administrative databases. Kaiser Permanente Georgia (KPGA), in association with the CDC and Georgia Department of Public Health, previously conducted an arthritis surveillance study. We conduct additional analysis to provide an understanding of the additional burden of arthritis upon health care utilization.

Methods: The service area of KPGA is the 20-county Atlanta Metropolitan area, and covers approximately 282,000 members, or approximately 7% of the population in this area. With respect to age, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, membership is representative of the area population and it has been shown that the arthritis prevalence is similar to that of the United States. Using data from the previous analysis, we compared 1-year (1999) of health care utilization in 77,000 arthritis patients to non-arthritic control subjects matched on age, sex, number of months enrolled during 1999, and home health care facility. The difference in utilization between these two groups estimated the utilization attributable to arthritis. Health care utilization was stratified by primary and specialty care outpatient visits, inpatient and emergency department visits.

Results: Arthritic persons averaged 3 more health care visits per year than non-arthritic persons with the heaviest burden falling into Primary care (2 more) and Specialty care (1 more) visits. Arthritic persons visited the emergency room twice as frequently as non-arthritic persons and had fifty percent more hospitalizations and hospital days.

Conclusions: Arthritis related diseases contribute a considerable burden to the health care delivery system. Effective case management and arthritis self-management programs could help reduce utilization of health care services.