

POSTER ABSTRACTS

11th Annual HMO Research Network Conference

April 4-6, 2005 Santa Fe, NM

Chronic Disease 18

The Boomers Are Coming: A Total Cost of Care Model of the Impact of Population Aging on the Cost of Chronic Conditions in the U.S.

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Background: This study estimates the impact of population aging on medical costs over the next five decades in the U.S. The focus is on chronic and/or expensive conditions often included in disease management programs: coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, diabetes, asthma, obstetrics, psychiatry, and chemical dependency. We go beyond previous macro-economic studies by modeling the effects of aging on medical costs at a clinically meaningful level of detail.

Methods: Our model applies estimated age-, gender-, and condition-specific annualized costs to U.S. population projections in each age and gender group through 2050. This provides an estimate of future health care costs, assuming the age, gender, and disease cost profiles remain the same and holding other factors that could affect costs constant.

The primary data sources are pooled claims and membership for 2002-2003 for HealthPartners. Secondary sources are U.S. annualized medical costs and U.S. Census Bureau demographic projections. Populations used to create age-specific per capita costs include Commercial, Medicaid and Medicare. We group medical claims, pharmacy claims and demographic information into clinically meaningful Symmetry episode treatment groups (ETGs) representing complete episodes of care. We aggregate selected ETGs into the conditions reported in this study.

Results: We project that from 2000-2050 the aging of the population would result in an 18% increase in overall medical costs over the next five decades, with most of the change taking place from 2000-2030. However, there is a great deal of variation of the impact of population aging on specific chronic diseases. Diseases where the ratio of costs for older vs. younger ages is greater will be affected most by population aging.

Conclusions: These disease-specific projections can inform health policy and planning as providers of health care, health plans, and disease management vendors anticipate meeting future U.S. health care needs.

Note: This is draft and has not yet undergone peer review for publication. Findings and conclusions are subject to change. Funded in part by HealthPartners Research Foundation, grant #03-091