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Health care utilization and cost among health maintenance organization members with temporomandibular disorders.

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Source

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Abstract

AIMS:

Little has been reported on the use of health care services and consequent costs among persons with temporomandibular disorders (TMD). This project compared the use and cost of medical and dental care services for TMD patients and matched comparison subjects.

METHODS:

Patients were continuously enrolled members of Kaiser Permanente Northwest Division who had at least 1 TMD Clinic visit or TMD-related procedure between January 1990 and December 1995 (n = 8,801). An equal number of comparison subjects were identified electronically and matched on 14 variables, including age and gender. Utilization and cost estimates were determined and compared for selected medical and dental services.

RESULTS:

For both groups, the mean age was about 40.5 years, and approximately 80% were female. The TMD subjects used significantly more services than did comparison subjects and had mean costs that were 1.6 times higher for all services. Outpatient visits accounted for about 40% of the difference in mean costs. About 10% of TMD subjects and comparison subjects accounted for about 40% and 47% of the costs in each group, respectively. Female TMD subjects and comparison subjects had higher costs than their male counterparts, and male TMD subjects had higher costs than female comparison subjects.

CONCLUSION:

Patients with TMD used more of all types of services and had higher costs. A small proportion of the subjects accounted for a large proportion of the costs. Gender was an important factor in utilization and cost. Utilization and cost differences were consistent over a wide range of service categories and could not be explained by TMD alone.

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