

Epidemiology/Genetics Abstracts

Title: SPINA BIFIDA HEALTHCARE UTILIZATION AND EXPENDITURES

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Background: Spina bifida is a neural tube birth defect that results in lifelong problems in multiple body systems. The nature and distribution of these conditions across groups defined by age are still to be established. Information is particularly lacking with regard to the health status, overall diagnostic profile, treatment patterns and costs for adults with spina bifida.

Spina bifida occurs in approximately 3 per 10,000 live births in the United States. Before 1960, as few as 10% of infants born with spina bifida survived. Since that time improvements in medical care have improved survival to the extent that 80% survive to adulthood. The estimated lifetime medical cost per infant born with spina bifida is approximately \$560,000 in 2003 dollars, using a 3% discount

Method: Healthcare utilization and costs will be analyzed among individuals in administrative datasets in which medical encounters are recorded for payment. Groups of individuals affected by spina bifida in the same payment plans exist in the Veterans Health Administration (VA) Spina Bifida Healthcare Program, the MarketScan private insurance database, and the MarketScan Medicaid data pooled from four states.

Results: The analyses will be compared to reflect the differences and the accompanying charges. First, there will be a comparison of healthcare utilization and costs for children with SB who are publicly and privately insured. Second, there will be an analysis of utilization and costs for associated medical conditions among privately insured individuals across the life span. Third, the VA data allows for analysis of health care utilization and payments in relation to clinical data.

Conclusion: This information will be of interest to those who assume responsibility for the ongoing care and cost of persons affected by spina bifida.