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 Review Article

Patient Perception of Orthopedic Surgeon Reimbursement

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Abstract

Significant attention has been directed at evaluating reimbursement rates to orthopedic surgeons for various surgical procedures. To evaluate patients' understanding of the surgeon reimbursement process, studies using patient surveys have been conducted to determine patients' perceptions of orthopedic surgeon compensation. To date, there has been no systematic review to consolidate the data of these studies. This study aimed to synthesize the findings of these individual studies across multiple subspecialties of orthopedic surgery to evaluate the potential discrepancy between how much patients believe orthopedic surgeons are reimbursed and the actual reimbursement rate. We performed a systematic review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to identify studies that report findings of patient perceptions of orthopedic surgeon reimbursement for various procedures. Searches were conducted using MEDLINE through PubMed, Embase, and Scopus. Summary estimates of reimbursement discrepancies across subspecialties and overall were reported as unweighted averages of the individual study results within each group. Twelve studies were identified that met inclusion criteria, constituting 4309 surveys. These survey studies measured patients' perceptions of how much orthopedic surgeons are reimbursed for common procedures, including anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction, arthroscopic meniscectomy, carpal tunnel release, rotator cuff repair, multiple spine procedures and total shoulder, hip, and knee arthroplasty. It was found that patients reported reasonable surgeon's fees to be 11.2 times more than actual Medicare reimbursement. Among individual studies, the largest discrepancies were seen in total hip arthroplasty (26 times), whereas the smallest difference was in anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction (1.6 times). On average, patients estimated Medicare reimbursement rates to be 5.9 times higher than the actual surgeon reimbursement. Patients consistently overestimate how much orthopedic surgeons are reimbursed for common orthopedic procedures. The results of this systematic review suggest that patients may value these procedures more than what Medicare reimburses. Such information may help educate the public, direct policy, and increase transparency between orthopedic surgeons and patients.

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