



Primary care physician contacts in 2007 – Background and analyses

Riens B • Erhart M • Mangiapane S

Abstract

Background: The average number of primary care physician contacts per year is a central indicator of the utilization of the ambulatory primary care sector and is a basic component of a sophisticated healthcare report. An analysis of the average number of primary care contacts per GKV-insure in 2007 is made. Additionally a statistic analysis and a regional investigation are done. The focus of the study is the screening of the factors which influence the average contact number. The theoretical framework is the health behavioural model of Andersen et al., dividing the influencing variables into the components predisposing characteristics, enabling resources, and need factors.

Methods: The basis of calculation are the nationwide ambulatory care claims data of 2007. Not included are laboratory services and services which billed by pathologists. Multivariate linear regression of the association between the physician contacts and different predictors are done on the individual level and on the macro level.

Results: The nationwide mean value average to 17 physician contacts in 2007, whereupon women show a higher number of contacts than men (20 vs. 14). 50 per cent of the insures have less than 11 physician contacts per year (median 10). There is a strong unequal distribution of the physician contacts. About 16% of the patients utilize 50% of the contacts. Therefore the mean value of physician contacts in Germany is characterized by a minor part of insures with high utilization. It is shown that especially morbidity of the insures, as well as the predisposing factors sex, age, region (east/west) and socioeconomic location parameter (e.g. employment rate, household income) have a statistic significant influence on the average number of physician contacts. Regional analyses of the age and sex standardized average number of physician contacts in 2007 show regional variations in terms of an east-west-difference with less contacts is the new federal states (range new federal states: 15 (Saxony) – 17 (Mecklenburg-West Pomerania)).

Conclusion: The results show that the average number of primary physician contacts is influenced essentially by a small number of patients with a high level of contacts. These patients are characterized by the need of intensive ambulatory care (e.g. older patients, patients with at least one Morbi-RSA-disease). An isolated contemplation tends consequently to a misinterpretation of the healthcare events.