The prescription for health cost control.

Sir

Dr Umeh\textsuperscript{1} highlighted cost consciousness in Saudi public sector physicians to secondary and tertiary levels of care. But considering the fact that primary care level, form the base of the health care pyramid, I am of the opinion that the subject of cost-consciousness and control at primary care level should be looked into separately. This may reveal an intriguingly different parameters to what was observed in hospitals.

From my experience at grass root level, users demand and mis-use of health care services are some of the factors contributing to escalating cost of health care which need investigation.

A good study of this subject especially at primary care level is desirable. This may further help the cost-consciousness/control efforts.

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References


Cholelithiasis in Saudi Females

Sir

Bakhotma\textsuperscript{1} has commendably analysed his data and arrived at valid clinical as well as community oriented conclusions. Though formation of gallstone has confounding factors,\textsuperscript{2} the important message is “fat, fertile females” are more susceptible for gallstones. The study indirectly emphesises for a healthy life style. From epidemiological and clinical point, few additional information are furnished below: (A) Sex steroid receptor in gallbladder: Patients who have gallstones seem to come for cholecystectomy more often after hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or after high dose estrogen therapy for prostatic carcinoma.\textsuperscript{3} Also, women with gallbladder stones who take oral contraceptives are operated upon earlier if not more frequently.\textsuperscript{4} These findings strongly suggest that the sex steroids act by affecting gallbladder motility; by way of confirmation, sex steroid receptors have been found in the gallbladder.\textsuperscript{3} (B) Diabetes and sluggish motility of gallbladder: Can we speculate the possibility of sluggish motility of gallbladder due to autonomic neuropathy in diabetics, thus predisposing them for the development of gallstones? (C) Skin pigmentation and UV light: “The activation of the skin pigmented system by ultraviolet light might increase their bile concentration and thus the risk of gallstone formation. This holds especially true for people with light complexion, whose storage capacity for melanin seems to be limited”.\textsuperscript{5}

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Reply from Author

Sir

I would first like to thank Dr. Adeleke for his interest in cost-containment in the Saudi health system.

I fully agree with Dr Adeleke that the subject of cost-consciousness and control of utilization at the primary care level deserve a separate study. Given the Kingdoms commitment to the “Primary Care Approach”, and the enormous amount of resources devoted to this level of care, it is imperative that any serious effort at cost-containment in the system pay close attention to the utilization patterns at the primary care level. This issue of frivolous demands because of lack of economic incentives on consumers in this country is also a known fact. I am fully aware of the fact that parties other than doctors need cost conscious measures. The paper which Dr Adeleke referred to, dealt with the issue of raising physicians cost-consciousness, and briefly highlighted other culprits of health cost escalations including consumers and administrators.

As suggested by Dr Adeleke separate studies of primary care utilization will be helpful. Such studies might include physicians profiling to determine prescription patterns, and identify deviant patterns which need be corrected. As for consumer frivolous demands, it has been recommended that economic incentives and other measures be introduced to act as constraints.

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Reply from the author

I read with great interest the comment of Dr P Thirumalaikutundusubramanian regarding my article, “Cholelithiasis in Saudi Adult Females”.

Currently, I am investigating the gallbladder motility and gallbladder function in diabetic patients and also the presence of sex hormone receptors in the gallbladder. I hope the result will be available at a later date for publishing.

The relation of skin pigmentation and gallstone formation is very interesting and deserves further research and investigation.

The comments of my colleagues are highly appreciated and are highly valuable.

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References