

Minimally Invasive Surgery Saves Money



In a new analysis of surgical outcomes, it was revealed that greater use of minimally invasive surgery for certain common procedures can help reduce post-operative complications and can also reduce the nation's health care bill by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The research was conducted by John Hopkins investigators and was published in JAMA-Surgery. The research suggests that American hospitals could collectively prevent thousands of post-surgical complications that could result in savings of \$280 to \$340 million a year. This can be achieved by using more minimally invasive procedures instead of traditional open surgery for routine operations of the appendix, colon and lungs.

"Minimally invasive surgery, done in the right patients, represents an under-recognised opportunity not only for cost savings, but also for making surgery safer, reducing the very real suffering associated with surgical complications," says lead investigator Marty Makary, M.D., M.P.H., professor of surgery at the John Hopkins University School of Medicine.

For the purpose of this study, researchers analysed over 80,000 surgical cases from the National Inpatient Sample database. They tracked seven common post-surgical complications and associated billing charges for some common operations. The procedures that were tracked by the researchers involved operations of the appendix, colon or lungs. The researchers note that while not all patients can be considered for minimally invasive treatment, this study reveals a great variation in its use among those who do qualify.

The study investigators compared the cost for each patient who underwent traditional surgery against the estimated cost for the same patient undergoing minimally invasive treatment. They collected potential cost savings under two hypothetical scenarios: when all hospitals increased their use of minimally invasive surgery by 50 percent and when the hospitals performing the fewest such procedures, the so-called low utilisers, upped them to the level of hospitals performing in the upper one-third.

The analysis showed that if all US hospitals were to increase the number of minimally invasive procedures by 50 percent, they would be able to avert 3,578 complications and would also be able to reduce hospital stay by 144,863 days. This would translate into annual savings of \$288 million. Similarly, if hospitals performing the fewest minimally invasive operations boosted their levels to those of their higher-performing counterparts, they would be able to save \$337 million a year with 4306 fewer complications and 169,819 fewer hospital days.

The research team believes that these findings should be taken seriously and hospitals should increase their capacity for minimally invasive treatment. However, it is important to remember that minimally invasive surgery is not always the optimal method of treatment and may not be applicable on all patients.

Source: John Hopkins Medicine

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Published on : Fri, 27 Mar 2015