

Cost comparisons between family-based care and nursing home care for dementia

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Abstract

A prospective study was carried out in Taiwan to measure the family cost of caregiving at home for 289 patients newly diagnosed with dementia (106 with senile-type dementia, 171 with vascular-type dementia). Their families were first interviewed in the outpatient department and then followed for 1 month after the dementia diagnosis was made. Simultaneously, the costs for providing nursing home care to patients with dementia were calculated using accounting data reported from six nursing homes. Comparisons were made between the amount and type of cost encountered by families and by nursing homes to determine whether family-based care was cheaper and more appropriate than nursing home care for dementia patients with different functional levels. The results showed that higher costs were encountered for caregiving at home when the patients had severe dependence. This tendency was more evident for patients with senile dementia than for patients with vascular-type dementia. The cost of labour was an important expense for families caring for patients at home (at least 85% of family costs). Our findings suggest that, when family labour cost is considered, nursing home care is less expensive than family-based care for long-term care, especially for dementia patients with severe or moderate dependence. Nursing home care is also a better choice when patients have great need for multiple health services.