

## 2016 ISPOR ABSTRACT

### Authors:

Ramachandran S<sup>1</sup>, BanahanBF<sup>1</sup>, Hardwick SP<sup>1</sup>, Noble S<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center for Pharmaceutical Marketing and Management, University of Mississippi, University, MS, USA

<sup>2</sup> Mississippi Division of Medicaid, Jackson, MS, USA

## QUALITY OF CARE AND HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION AMONG FOSTER CHILDREN IN MISSISSIPPI MEDICAID

### OBJECTIVE

Children placed in foster care are among our nation's most vulnerable populations. They tend to have more serious mental and medical health conditions when compared to other children. The objective of this project was to compare the health care utilization of foster and non-foster children enrolled in Mississippi Medicaid and compare them to other children in Medicaid.

### METHODS

A retrospective analysis was conducted using Mississippi Medicaid administrative claims for calendar years of 2013 and 2014. Beneficiaries were included if they were less than 21 years of age and eligible for services for at least one month during the observation year. Foster children were identified using Medicaid eligibility codes (003, 005, 026). All study variables were weighted based on age and race in order to provide the best comparison of health care utilization.

### RESULTS

Nearly 450,000 children were included in the study in both 2013 and 2014. The study population comprised of 49% males in both the foster and non-foster groups. At least 48% of the foster children had at least one mental-illness, compared to 18% of the other children. Prevalence rates for mental health illnesses such as psychosis, bipolar-disorder, depression, ADHD were all higher in the foster population. 20% of foster children received at least one mental health medication as compared to 7% of non-foster children. A significantly higher proportion of foster children used each class of mental-health drugs such as barbiturates, antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anticonvulsants.

### CONCLUSIONS

The findings are consistent with other studies. It is important to provide effective and appropriate mental health screenings, assessment and treatment for all children, especially those in foster care. The results indicate that although use of mental health drugs is higher in foster children, the increased use is linked to increased morbidity rather than differences in treatment patterns.

*Statement to be included on poster*

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