

Counting the cost of COVID-19 at the peak of the pandemic in Spain

The impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on the public healthcare budget is substantial in Spain, report researchers from that country.

The researchers estimated the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Spain's public healthcare budget by extrapolating patient-level data from a retrospective cohort study conducted at a 252-bed hospital in Spain during the peak of the pandemic. The study included 1446 adults with suspected COVID-19 who visited the hospital's emergency room between 26 February and 21 May 2020.

The total impact of COVID-19 on the hospital's budget for the period of 86 days during the peak of the pandemic was estimated at €15.6 million or €10 744 per patient. Most of this spending (94.7%) was related to the treatment of patients who tested positive for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and were admitted to hospital, with mean costs per patient ranging from €50 132 for those without intensive-care unit (ICU) admission to €280 956 for those with ICU admission. Extrapolating these cost data to national level revealed total direct medical costs of €9.4 billion accrued up to the end of June 2020, corresponding to 12.3% of total public health expenditure in Spain. This cost figure is considerably higher than the spending on diabetes mellitus (€5.8 billion) or cancer (€4.8 billion), note the researchers. In a worst-case scenario, the total direct medical costs for the treatment of COVID-19 accrued up to the end of June 2020 at national level was estimated at €10.4 billion.

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