

Cost of breast cancer treatment. A 4-year longitudinal study.

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**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the longitudinal cost of the treatment of patients with breast cancer. **METHODS:** An analysis was performed of 200 women with 205 newly diagnosed breast cancers during 1989 in a health maintenance organization population (US Healthcare, Blue Bell, Pa). Medical records and claims data were analyzed for the total costs of medical care during the 4-year period after diagnosis. The costs over time were analyzed for clinical stage and use of mammography screening. **RESULTS:** The total costs of medical care during the 4-year period after diagnosis were strongly related to clinical stage at diagnosis, with higher total costs for patients with stages III to IV at diagnosis compared with patients with stages 0 to II at diagnosis. The cost for all stages of disease declined after years 1 to 2, with the exception of stage II, which increased slightly in years 3 to 4. The use of screening mammography was associated with a significant decrease in the cost of medical care during the 4-year study period. **CONCLUSIONS:** The goal of mammography screening programs should be to achieve downstaging to stages 0 to 1 to achieve reduction in breast

cancer mortality and to reduce the overall consumption of health care resources for the treatment of breast cancer. These cost data should be considered within the framework of future cost-effective analysis for screening mammography programs.