

How much does sepsis care cost the UK?

A summary by Virtual College

Introduction

It's very difficult to calculate the cost of sepsis to the UK, but a new study has made as accurate an attempt as possible and suggested improvements in securing data for the future.

A report has been released by The UK Sepsis Trust, which looks at how much treating the life-threatening blood condition costs every year. There are numerous sources of infection and sufferers can end up in hospital, with serious cases resulting in admissions to intensive care. Sepsis also has a high mortality rate, leading to high costs for both the healthcare system and society as a whole.

The study

One of the problems that has been identified in 'The cost of sepsis care in the UK' report is a lack of data relating to the condition. Areas where this could be improved include incidence, care pathways and cost. If sepsis was spotted at an earlier stage, for example, resources could be reduced in its treatment.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidelines last year to help improve diagnosis and the management of sepsis. It added that a robust way of gauging the instances of sepsis must be put in place, as well as a model for cost-effective treatment of the condition.

What this most recent study has tried to achieve is an accurate estimate of how much sepsis costs the UK to treat at present. This has been established as a potential range of figures, as there are various caveats to the data. Moving forward, the study has made recommendations as to how gaps can be filled in the future.



Methodology

The study used two main sources of evidence to work out the cost of sepsis to the UK. The first was an illness literature review that identified the perceived cost according to published academic literature on the issue. Secondly, key opinion leaders were engaged to check the costing approach and point out any unpublished evidence.



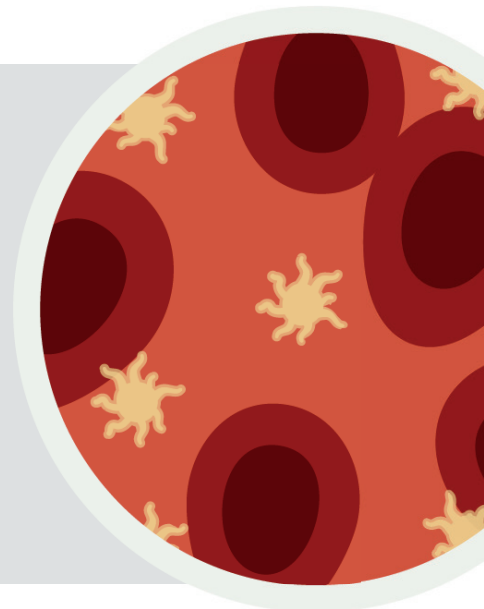
Results

What the study came to find was that sepsis costs the UK an estimated £7.76 billion a year, although it could easily be as much as £10 billion when some of the unknown factors are considered. In the first instance, the estimated direct costs are thought to be £830 million, but again, in reality, it could be more along the lines of £1.1 billion.



Conclusions

Even though it is acknowledged that there are gaps in the scope of this study, the findings are still worthwhile. It concludes that the cost of sepsis care in the UK is significant, whether this is considered in terms of direct costs or productivity costs. Any improvements that could be implemented to reduce the instances of sepsis and the mortality rate would save the NHS money.



Recommendations

The recommendations put forward are as follows:

- New directives on clinical coding for sepsis should be adopted by NHS Hospital Trusts in England and the rest of the UK.
- With improved clinical coding, better cost burden analysis could be achieved in two to three years.
- A sepsis registry should be set up to ensure that the key metrics of those with the condition are documented. This is in line with a recommendation that NICE had previously put forward.



Healthcare professionals can do their bit to ensure that sepsis is diagnosed as easily as possible, benefiting the patient and cutting healthcare costs. The best way to keep knowledge up-to-date is to undertake an online training course focusing on the signs of sepsis and how to spot them.

Virtual College has recently worked with **The UK Sepsis Trust** to create a course which gives professionals an understanding of how to manage sepsis safely. To find out more click **here**.

Screenshot from Virtual College's 'The Safe Management of Sepsis' online course



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