

NHS statistics reveal data errors in care records

April 5 2012

In a letter published today in the *British Medical Journal*, authors from Imperial College London NHS Healthcare Trust stress the importance of accurately capturing and coding patient episodes.

The authors reviewed available data from HESonline, the national statistic warehouse of England of the care provided by the NHS.

Statistics found were interesting and surprising: on average, 1600 adults aged over 30 apparently attend outpatient child and adolescent psychiatry services in England each year. There has also been a steep increase in the number of adults attending outpatient paediatric services since 2003 which in 2009-10 stood at 20,000.

The authors joke that the amount of adults using paediatric services maybe part of an innovative exchange programme as results show that, apparently, the number of 0-19 year olds attending geriatric services has increased steadily with over 3000 attendances in 2009-10.

Further results which surprised the authors were the amount of [male patients](#) attending apparently female medical appointments. They found that many males were attending obstetrics, [gynaecology](#) and midwifery clinics: between 2009-10 there were over 17,000 male inpatient admissions to obstetric services, over 8000 to gynaecology and nearly 20,000 to [midwifery](#).

The authors suggest that while these statistics reveal "some interesting

service developments" and they "applaud innovation", they reflect some likely data errors.

The authors argue that this data will inform the decision making regarding how NHS services are commissioned. They conclude that clinicians should "all examine the data being submitted by and about our services for unintentional innovation".

Provided by British Medical Journal

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