

Child maltreatment underreported in Medicaid claims, study finds

September 25 2014

(Medical Xpress)—Medicaid claims are a poor way to identify child abuse and neglect at a population level, according to a study from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

Lead author Ramesh Raghavan, PhD, associate professor at the Brown School and of psychiatry at the School of Medicine, examined Medicaid records from 36 states for 1,921 children in the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, whom caseworkers had identified as having been maltreated, and who had received Medicaid-funded services.

Only 15 percent had relevant codes for abuse or neglect in any of their Medicaid files over four years of observation.

Maltreated children are frequent users of health and [mental health services](#); almost all are entitled to Medicaid.

Medicaid records of maltreated boys, older children, and African Americans were less likely to reflect abuse than those of other children, the study found.

Previous research has documented the reasons clinicians may not enter maltreatment codes while billing Medicaid, but the magnitude at a national level has not been known.

"This study has important implications for Medicaid scholarship conducted on abused and neglected children," said Raghavan, who also is

a faculty scholar in the Institute for Public Health. "It seems clear that relying upon Medicaid claims yields unacceptably low rates of ascertained maltreatment."

Instead, he said, researchers should include data from child welfare or other administrative data sets to better capture the prevalence of abuse or neglect at a [population level](#).

The study was published online in the August issue of *Child Maltreatment*.

More information: Ramesh Raghavan, Derek S. Brown, Benjamin T. Allaire, Lauren D. Garfield, Raven E. Ross, and Donald Hedeker. "Challenges in Using Medicaid Claims to Ascertain Child Maltreatment." *Child Maltreat* 1077559514548316, first published on August 26, 2014 [DOI: 10.1177/1077559514548316](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559514548316)

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

Citation: Child maltreatment underreported in Medicaid claims, study finds (2014, September 25) retrieved 15 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-child-maltreatment-underreported-medicaid.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.