

# Chronic pain conditions cost \$32K per patient annually

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(HealthDay)—Chronic pain conditions pose a substantial utilization burden on the health care system, according to a study published online Oct. 7 in *Pain Practice*.

Peter W. Park, Ph.D., from Pfizer Inc. in New York City, and colleagues analyzed [electronic medical records](#) and health claims data from the Henry Ford Health System to determine [health care](#) resource utilization and costs for patients with 24 [chronic pain conditions](#) (January to December 2010).

Based upon 12,165 patients, the researchers found that aside from pharmacy, outpatient visits were the most used resource, with a mean 18.8 visits per patient for the post-index period. Specialty visits accounted for 59.0 percent of outpatient visits. A mean of 5.2 discrete

imaging tests were utilized per patient. Opioids were the most commonly prescribed medication (38.7 percent). For all conditions, the total annual direct costs were \$386 million (\$31,692 per patient; a 40 percent increase from the pre-index). Over 14 percent of total costs were from pharmacy costs, but outpatient visits were the primary cost driver.

"This type of research supports integrated delivery systems as a source for assessing opportunities to improve patient outcomes and lower the costs for chronic pain patients," the authors write.

Several authors are employees of Pfizer, the sponsor of the study.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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