

Free children's visits increase care and workforce burden

May 14 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

In July 2015, all children under six years of age gained free access to daytime and out-of-hours general practice services in the Republic of Ireland, resulting in a 25 percent increase in utilization.

Comparing the year prior to the introduction of free GP care with the following year, daytime general practitioner visits by children under six years increased from 9,789 to 12,600, while out-of-hours visits increased from 15,087 to 18,958.

In the post-period, nine percent more children were seen at least once in daytime services and 20 percent more children were seen at least once out-of-hours.

While visits by patients of all ages increased in the post-period, [children](#) under age six were responsible for a disproportionate increase in service utilization, accounting for 45 percent of additional daytime visits and 73 percent of additional out-of-hours visits.

Given the inevitable increase in [service](#) utilization that accompanies the availability of free care, and with indications that Ireland's GP workforce may soon struggle to meet demand, the authors call for careful workforce planning if state-funded general practice care is extended to other groups.

More information: Michael Edmund O'Callaghan et al. Free Children's Visits and General Practice Attendance, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2018). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2229](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2229)

Provided by American Academy of Family Physicians

Citation: Free children's visits increase care and workforce burden (2018, May 14) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-free-children-workforce-burden.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.