Utilisation of inpatient cardiology services including by Māori: a study of hospital discharges for patients enrolled with Partnership Health practices for the 2 years ending June 2007

Authors: Malcolm L, Barnett R

Summary: Māori and non-Māori rates of utilisation of cardiology inpatient services were analysed by linking the enrolled population of Partnership Health with hospital discharge data from the New Zealand Health Information Service. Rates of discharges for the 2 years ending June 2007 (n=127,246) were analysed in relation to age, gender, ethnicity (19,712 Māori), deprivation score and other variables. Rates of utilisation including cardiology in patient services were analysed by diagnosis-related groups (DRGs). Standardised Māori rates of utilisation for almost all major cardiology DRG categories were substantially higher than the non-Māori population. Overall rates for cardiology DRGs were 1.47 times higher for Māori. Standardised Māori rates were higher than the non-Māori population for higher deprivation scores. Māori cardiology inpatients had almost twice the level of Care Plus levels than the non-Māori population. The researchers stress that the higher rate of hospital utilisation suggests that higher quality data rather than increased access is the explanation.

Comment: As the authors have indicated, the results may in fact reflect better data quality and not actual improvements. It would be useful to also know confidence levels and statistical significance of results. Finally, the authors haven’t stated if utilisation reflects health need, or is associated with equitable outcome. A follow-up study is required.


Independent commentary by Dr Matire Harwood

Dr Matire Harwood (Ngapuhi) has worked in Hauora Māori, primary health and rehabilitation settings as clinician and researcher since graduating from Auckland Medical School in 1994. She also holds positions on a number of boards, committees and advisory groups including the Health Research Council. Matire lives in Auckland with her whānau including partner Haunui and two young children Te Rangiura and Waimarie.

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