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Differentiating Annual Wellness Visits and Health Maintenance Visits

Community Health Center of Rutland

Ben Price

Family Medicine, August 2022

Problem Identification

- Annual wellness visits are covered by Medicare part B yearly for patients. These visits include ^[3]
 - A review of family and medical history and medications
 - Vital signs (height, weight, BP) review
 - A screening schedule for appropriate preventative services
 - Advance care planning
- Health maintenance visits are not covered by Medicare but can be covered by private insurance. These visits include a physical exam as well as the topics for an annual wellness visit
- Due to recent changes in workflow at the office, many visits that should be Medicare Annual Wellness Visits are incorrectly scheduled as health maintenance visits. These mistakes are not always identified leading to confusion for both the patient and providers and unnecessary bills for the patient.
- AHEC focus area: Medical practice transformation (quality improvement)

Public Health Cost

- An annual wellness visit was associated with statistically significant reduction in spending on hospital acute care and outpatient services.^[1]
- People who received annual wellness visits had a 5.7% reduction in adjusted public healthcare costs over the next 11 months. The greatest reduction was seen with patients with higher risk conditions.^[1]
- Greater use of proven clinical preventive services in the United States could avert the loss of more than two million life-years annually. What's more, increasing the use of these services from current levels to 90 percent in 2006 would result in total savings of \$3.7 billion, or 0.2 percent of U.S. personal health care spending.^[2]

Community/Clinic Perspective

Community:

- “When I made the appointment, I thought it was a physical. I’m not really sure what this visit is for.” – **Patient receiving annual wellness visit**
- I was confused when I scheduled the visit. I received a paper about the visit but thought it was just a normal physical.” – **Patient receiving annual wellness visit**

Clinic:

- “ It’s hard for providers and patients to understand the value of these visits if a physical exam is not included.” – **Andrea Wicher, Director of Population Health & Quality, Community Health Rutland**

Intervention and methodology

Research

Research the differences between annual wellness visits and health maintenance visits

Interview

Interview staff and patients regarding the confusion around these visits

Develop

Develop a resource to address these confusions to increase efficiency and decrease confusion of staff.

Results

Annual Wellness Visit vs Health Maintenance Visit

Impact of Annual Wellness Visits:

- An annual wellness visit was associated with **statistically significant reduction in spending** on hospital acute care and outpatient services.^[1]
- People who received annual wellness visits had a **5.7% reduction in adjusted public healthcare costs** over the next 11 months. The greatest reduction was seen with patients with higher risk conditions.^[1]

Annual Wellness Visit:

- **For patients 65 or older** with Medicare part B for longer than 12 months.
- **Physical exam NOT included in visit.**
- What can be covered in an annual wellness visit:
 - A review of your medical and family history.
 - A review of your current providers and prescriptions.
 - Height, weight, blood pressure, and other routine measurements.
 - Personalized health advice.
 - A list of risk factors and treatment options for you.
 - A screening schedule (like a checklist) for appropriate preventive services.
 - Advance care planning.

Health Maintenance Visit:

- Generally, **for patients younger than 65.**
- Includes physical exam.
- **NOT covered by Medicare.**

Sources

[1] Adam, Beckman, et al. "Medicare Annual Wellness Visit Association With Healthcare Quality and Costs." *The American Journal of Managed Care*, vol. 25, no. 3, 8 Mar. 2019.



Effectiveness and Limitations

Pamphlets are easy to read and reference and can be used conveniently by office staff.

Helps staff understand the differences between annual wellness visits and health maintenance visits and when to schedule one versus another.

Tracking the current rate at which annual wellness visits are incorrectly scheduled and re-check in a few months to see if that rate is decreasing.

Does not address the increased work required by providers and their staff to check upcoming visits, contact patients, and fill out forms.

Future Interventions /Projects

Training for scheduling staff to fill out annual wellness visit form with patient before visit.

Patient education on differences between annual wellness visit and health maintenance visits. This could be done via a handout or more training for office staff.

References

1. Adam, Beckman, et al. "Medicare Annual Wellness Visit Association With Healthcare Quality and Costs." *The American Journal of Managed Care*, vol. 25, no. 3, 8 Mar. 2019.
2. Maciosek, Michael V., et al. "Greater Use of Preventive Services in U.S. Health Care Could Save Lives at Little or No Cost." *Health Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 9, Sept. 2010, pp. 1656–1660., <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2008.0701>.
3. "Yearly 'Wellness' Visits." Annual Wellness Visit Coverage, Medicare.gov, <https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/yearly-wellness-visits>.