



Title	Effect of fee-paying systems on consumption of dental services
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Effect of fee-paying systems on consumption of dental services.
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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of changing from a time-based to an item-based fee-paying system on patients' consumption of dental services and dentists' productivity in a university campus clinic. Data was collected from the University Health Service (UHS) dental clinic of the University of Hong Kong which serves all university students and staff. A time-based fee-paying system had been in use up to February 1999 when it switched to an item-based system. Computerized records of all patients in two 1-year periods starting from February 1996 and from February 1999 were used to generate results on dental service utilization by patients and productivity of dentists. Results showed little change in the percentage of eligible persons who attended the UHS dental clinic in a year (29.7% in 1996 vs 28.3% in 1999). However, on average, patients consumed more dental service items after the switch in fee-paying system (4.0 in 1996 vs 4.6 in 1999). There was an increase in the mean number of dental service items provided by a dentist per working week after the change in fee-paying system (95.1 in 1996 vs 118.1 in 1999). Patients' waiting time for an appointment had also shortened from two months in 1996 to within three weeks in 1999. In conclusion, on switching from a time-based to an item-based fee-paying system, dentists in the UHS dental clinic became more productive and the consumption of dental services by patients also increased. (Supported by the University of Hong Kong.)

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