The purpose of this study was to assess the feasibility and reliability of a well-known checklist as a quality assessment tool. OBJECTIVES: Five experienced health economists applied the BMJ checklist, a 35-item questionnaire, to 12 model-based economic evaluations of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) inhibitors. Overall quality of the studies was assessed by measuring the number of positive answers to the questions. RESULTS: The five assessors were able to apply the checklist to all 12 studies. The checklist was able to discriminate among the 12 studies, with the total number of positive answers per study ranging from 87 to 132. Although there was a high level of agreement among the assessors’ overall scores for the 12 studies, there was considerable disagreement on specific questions, with 100% agreement among all 5 assessors in only 168/420 (35 × 12) possible instances. Often, disagreements occurred for seemingly factual questions (example: Are details of currency or price adjustments for inflation or currency conversion given?). Also, there was a strong relationship between the overall study quality score of the studies and the level of agreement among the assessors. This reflected the fact that quality of study reporting is the main focus of the BMJ checklist, rather than the underlying methodological quality of the studies. Even given this focus, it was felt that additional questions related to drug dosing and cost as well as main model parameters should be added to the checklist. CONCLUSIONS: The checklist could discriminate among studies, but focused mainly on the quality of reporting rather than the methodological quality of studies. More study is required of the purpose, feasibility, and reliability of the various methodological checklists.

A REVIEW OF TOTAL COST BURDEN OF FIBROMYALGIA

OBJECTIVE: To characterize the burden of illness of fibromyalgia to employers, insurers, and society. METHODS: Two databases were searched, Medline and Healthstar, limited to English language and years 1990–2004. Key search words included fibromyalgia, cost, economics, employment, productivity and disability. Articles were selected that reported utilization of health care resources characterized by either indirect or direct costs. The total cost of fibromyalgia and contributing cost drivers were determined; costs were compared to other diseases. RESULTS: A total of 12 articles were reviewed for cost and five of these reported productivity cost. The estimated annual total cost per patient was $5163–$11,548 for employers, $2274–$9374 for insurers and $3534.84 for society. Direct costs included: inpatient, outpatient, office visits, medications, alternative medicine, diagnostic tests, lab work and emergency room visits. Indirect costs included: absenteeism, presenteeism, work loss and disability. Productivity loss, medical care and prescriptions were the major determinants of costs to employers. Insurer costs were driven by inpatient care, medications and outpatient visits. Societal costs were driven by health care procedures and productivity impairments. Productivity costs were accountable for 26%–54% of the total cost to employers, and were most often measured by disability and time off work. Only one abstract was identified that measured productivity in FMS patients using a patient-reported measure. CONCLUSION: Fibromyalgia is a costly condition; with cost drivers varying by payor type. Productivity is a significant cost driver that should be considered to capture the full burden of fibromyalgia to both the employer and society. Most studies assessing productivity...