Consumer Prices for Surgical Management of Ankle Arthritis
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Introduction/Purpose: In the United States alone there are over 50,000 new cases of ankle arthritis every year. The financial healthcare burden for surgical management of ankle arthritis likely continues to rise with the volume of total ankle replacements (TAR) increasing 100-fold over the last 20 years. Healthcare consumers however are generally unaware of the costs of the services they use. Understanding the costs associated with operative management of ankle arthritis is an important facet of patient care although access to this information may not be readily available. The purpose of this study was to determine the access to the surgical cost of TARs and ankle arthrodesis and the variability of the cost between the two procedures.

Methods: 50 foot and ankle centers (25 academic, 25 private) that perform TARs and ankle arthrodeses were contacted using a standardized patient script. The described patient was a healthy 63-year-old male who had failed conservative treatment of ankle arthritis. Each institution was contacted up to three times to attempt to obtain a full bundled operative quote for a TAR and an ankle arthrodesis.

Results: 21 centers (42%, 14 academic, 7 private) were able to provide a quote for a TAR and ankle arthrodesis. The mean bundled price for a TAR was $50,332 (SD +/- $25,744) with the mean academic and private center quote being $56,529 and $37,937 respectively. The mean bundled price for an ankle arthrodesis was $41,756 (SD +/- $26,033) with the mean academic and private center quote being $48,116 and $29,037 respectively. There was no statistically significant difference between the bundled price for TAR and ankle arthrodesis.

Conclusion: There was limited availability of consumer prices for TAR and ankle arthrodesis thus hindering healthcare consumers’ decision making. When comparing different institutions for surgical management of ankle arthritis, there was a wide range of quotes for both TAR and ankle arthrodesis. When comparing the choice of surgical management for ankle arthritis, there was no difference in price between TAR and ankle arthrodesis.

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