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An innovative approach to reducing medical care utilization and expenditures

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Abstract

In a retrospective study, we assessed the impact on medical utilization and expenditures of a multicomponent prevention program, the Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health (MVAH). We compared archival data from Blue Cross/Blue Shield Iowa for MVAH (n = 693) with statewide norms for 1985 through 1995 (n = 600,000) and with a demographically matched control group (n = 4,148) for 1990, 1991, 1994, and 1995. We found that the 4-year total medical expenditures per person in the MVAH group were 59% and 57% lower than those in the norm and control groups, respectively; the 11-year mean was 63% lower than the norm. The MVAH group had lower utilization and expenditures across all age groups and for all disease categories. Hospital admission rates in the control group were 11.4 times higher than those in the MVAH group for cardiovascular disease, 3.3 times higher for cancer, and 6.7 times higher for mental health and substance abuse. The greatest savings were seen among MVAH patients older than age 45, who had 88% fewer total patients days compared with control patients. Our results confirm previous research supporting the effectiveness of MVAH for preventing disease. Our evaluation suggests that MVAH can be safely used as a cost-effective treatment regimen in the managed care setting.

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