

THE BURDEN OF OSTEOARTHRITIS IN SPAIN

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OBJECTIVES:

To estimate the socio-economic burden of osteoarthritis in Spain by calculating the direct and indirect costs of the disease.

METHODS:

The annual direct (pharmacy, physician consultations, surgery) and indirect (productivity losses due to temporary or permanent disability) costs of osteoarthritis in 2001 were calculated. The prevalence approach was used to calculate the burden of disease. The human capital approach was used to estimate indirect costs. Data was gathered via a systematic literature review of published official and unofficial national and international sources.

RESULTS:

The current Spanish population suffering from osteoarthritis is estimated at 5,100,596 patients (16,45% of the population older than 20 years). The annual economic burden of osteoarthritis is at least 1,377 million. The direct costs represent 36.7% of the total burden (506 million), of which 23.9% is attributable to drugs, 56.3% to physician consultations and 19.7% to hip or knee replacement surgery. The indirect costs were estimated to be between 871 and 13,000 million annually.

CONCLUSIONS:

Osteoarthritis is a highly prevalent disease that puts a considerable socio-economic burden on Spanish society, especially in terms of productivity losses. Therefore, innovative treatments that have a proven high efficacy and long-term residual effects should be promoted to try to ease the disease burden. For instance, Chondroitin sulphate is one such treatment which also reduces analgesic and NSAID consumption by 20% and 67%, respectively, with a high safety profile



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