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Background

- As of 2021, hospital price transparency is federally mandated for all United States (U.S.) hospitals by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- This law allows for patients to compare costs of healthcare services or procedures prior to choosing their hospital.
- Upper extremity procedures are one of the most commonly performed elective surgeries across the U.S.
- Despite high compliance, recent literature has demonstrated a significant variability in pricing for upper extremity procedures across hospitals.
- The goal of this study was to evaluate how top orthopaedic surgery hospitals were complying with these regulations for carpal tunnel surgery.

Methods



- We conducted a search of carpal tunnel release at the top 50 orthopaedic surgery hospitals, according to U.S. News and World Report.
- “[Hospital Name] cost estimate” was used to identify each hospital’s chargemaster or online calculator.
- Search terms included:
 - “carpal tunnel surgery”
 - “carpal tunnel release”
 - “median nerve release”
 - “neuroplasty”
 - “64721”
 - “29848”
- Outcomes included: total charges, charges after insurance, minimum costs, maximum costs, time to cost calculator, etc.

Results



- Forty-seven (94%) of hospitals had a publicly available **cost calculator tool**.
- Forty-eight (98%) of hospitals provided a **chargemaster file** of standard procedure costs.
 - Chargemaster files were **CSV** (30%), **JSON** (24%), **XLSX** (24%), **TXT** (8%), **XML** (6%), and **PDF** (2%).
- Forty-seven (94%) of hospitals had **both**.

	Cost Calculator	Chargemaster
Success Rates	28%	39%
Median Cost	\$10,273	\$7,680
Minimum Cost	\$1,810	\$918
Maximum Cost	\$19,112	\$27,085

- The median combined gross charge for carpal tunnel release was **\$7,680**.

Conclusion

- Even with the current federal mandates, online cost-estimate calculators and chargemaster files are not adequate for patients to understand the costs of surgery or to make fully informed decisions as to where they should have carpal tunnel surgery.

References

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