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Prevalence and Trends in Pediatric-Onset Chronic Conditions in the United States, 1999-2018

Objective

We sought to provide an updated estimate of the current prevalence and recent trends (over the past two decades) in pediatric-onset conditions among a nationally-representative sample of youth to identify opportunities for prevention and intervention.

Methods

We performed a secondary data analysis of nationally-representative data on 236,412 participants (ages 5-25 years) from the 1999 to 2018 National Health Interview Survey. Chronic conditions (CCs) and functional limitations (FLs) were self-reported by the participant or a qualified proxy-respondent. We employed multivariate linear probability models to estimate annual average increase in CC/FL prevalence and differences in prevalence across sociodemographic characteristics.

Results

The prevalence of children (5-17 years) with a CC/FL has risen from 22.57% in 1999/2000 to 30.21% in 2017/2018 - an adjusted annual increase of 0.24% points per year ($P<.0001$) or about 130,000 additional children per year. The prevalence of young adults (18-25 years) with a CC/FL has risen similarly (adjusted annual increase of 0.33% points per year, $P<.0001$). Asthma and mental/behavioral health conditions were some of the leading CC and FL (respectively) contributors to this increase for both age groups. We estimate that approximately 1.2 million youth with a CC or FL currently turn 18 each year.

Conclusions

The US is currently seeing an unprecedented number of youth with pediatric-onset conditions. It is incumbent for the US health system to seek ways to treat these patients in pediatric settings and eventually matriculate them into adult care.

Keywords: children; chronic conditions; functional limitation; health care disparities; young adults

Biography

Dr. Lauren E. Wisk is a health services researcher and Assistant Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Health Services Research at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She also holds a faculty appointment in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on improving healthcare quality, access, and outcomes for children, adolescents, and adults living with chronic health conditions