



**REPORT SUMMARY**

# First, Do No Harm

Highlights from the October 2019 Washington Health Alliance report



The United States spends more on healthcare than any other country—nearly 18% of GDP.

An October 2019 JAMA study estimates that between 20% and 25% of that spending is wasteful<sup>1</sup>.

1. "Waste in the US Health Care System," JAMA, October 7, 2019



This summary covers highlights from a recent report conducted by the Washington Health Alliance (WHA) in Washington state. As the study points out, numerous factors contribute to waste, but among them is the continued provision of unnecessary medications, tests, and procedures, impacting millions of people nationwide and costing billions of dollars every year.

Utilizing the MedInsight Health Waste Calculator™, the study analyzed low-value healthcare services across the All-Payer Claims Database (APCD) for Washington, including over 4 million insured lives (commercial and Medicaid).





An estimated  
**\$371M**  
spent on low-value care

## What is “low-value”?

This refers to medical treatments, tests, and procedures shown to provide little benefit in particular clinical scenarios—and which, in many cases, have the potential to cause physical, emotional, and financial harm to patients, according to the WHA.

By following definitions such as those used by the Choosing Wisely® initiative, the report considers care “appropriate” when it is:

- Supported by well-established evidence
- Truly necessary to improve the outcome of care for a particular patient
- As free from harm as possible
- Not duplicative of other tests or procedures already received

If you’re hoping to learn more about reducing waste, the WHA study is a good place to start.

## Overall highlights

The following results share some of the highlights from the October 2019 WHA study. For more detailed results on these findings (including caveats and the number of wasteful services by measure category and line of business), [download the full report](#).

### Overall procedure results

The report measured 47 common treatments, tests, and procedures known by the medical community to be overused, analyzing data for both commercially insured and Medicaid-insured individuals.

*Of the approximately  
9 million services examined*

**51%**

**were found to be wasteful.**

# Top 10 wasteful services

These 10 areas of low-value care account for over 90% of waste for commercially insured patients, ranked by number of low-value services delivered:

■ Necessary  
■ Low-value

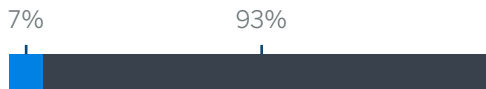
## #1 ANNUAL EKGS OR CARDIAC SCREENING FOR LOW-RISK INDIVIDUALS

An estimated cost of \$76.3 million.



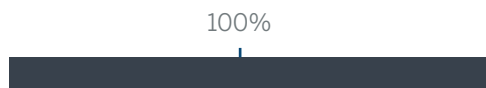
## #2 OPIATES PRESCRIBED FOR ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

An estimated cost of \$70.5 million.



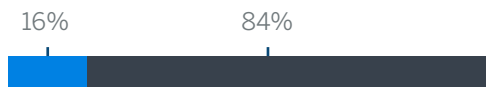
## #3 ANTIBIOTICS FOR ACUTE UPPER RESPIRATORY AND EAR INFECTIONS

An estimated cost of \$52.9 million.



## #4 PREOPERATIVE BASELINE LAB STUDIES PRIOR TO LOW-RISK PROCEDURES

An estimated cost of \$69.7 million.



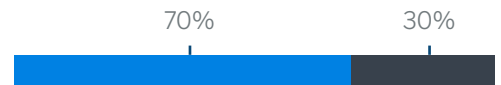
## #5 PSA SCREENING FOR PROSTATE CANCER IN ALL MEN, REGARDLESS OF AGE

An estimated cost of \$106.2 million.



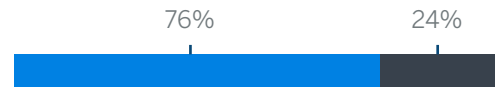
## #6 IMAGING TESTS FOR EYE DISEASE

An estimated cost of \$30.0 million.



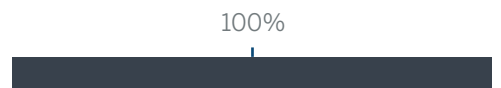
## #7 CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING FOR WOMEN

An estimated cost of \$28.0 million.



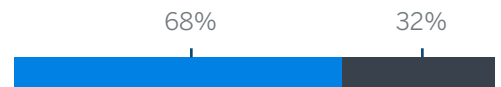
## #8 ROUTINE GENERAL HEALTH CHECKS FOR ASYMPTOMATIC ADULTS (18-64)

An estimated cost of \$27.1 million.



## #9 SCREENING FOR VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY

An estimated cost of \$33.5 million.



## #10 NSAIDS FOR HYPERTENSION, HEART FAILURE, OR CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

An estimated cost of \$5.4 million.



For more background, including Medicaid results, read the summary at [www.wacommunitycheckup.org/highlights/calculating-health-care-waste-in-washington-state-october-2019/](http://www.wacommunitycheckup.org/highlights/calculating-health-care-waste-in-washington-state-october-2019/)

# Reduce waste, reduce risk

We all want to improve care for and minimize harm to patients.  
The MedInsight Health Waste Calculator™ can help.

**Leveraging national, value-based initiatives such as Choosing Wisely®, and powerful Milliman-developed algorithms,** this standalone software product flags procedures as “Necessary,” “Likely Wasteful,” or “Wasteful.”

To learn more and see how the calculator works, schedule a demo.

**REQUEST A DEMO →**



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