

National Association of Vision Plans
Vision Exam Utilization Study
(Study period: 2008–2009)
Executive Summary

Observations

The National Association of Vision Care Plans (NAVCP) engaged Ingenix Consulting (IC) to study exam utilization patterns between different vision plans available to the commercial population. The study included data for over 86 million covered lives which was provided by U.S.-based managed vision plans.

In summary, the following observations were made:

- While vision plan membership has been increasing, exams have been utilized at a higher growth rate than vision plan memberships.
- Within a commercial population, members with exam and materials coverage are more than four times as likely to seek professional eye care than those with Exam-only coverage over a two-year period.
- Stand-alone Exam + Materials plans drive members to providers at more than double the rate of bundled plans.
- Only stand-alone Exam + Materials plans resulted in more than 50 percent of members receiving a routine eye examination at least once within a two-year period. This is nearly double the rate of bundled Exam + Materials plans.
- Under an Exam-only program, exam utilization lags behind both a limited materials benefit (such as those that exist in Medicare/Medicaid) and an Exam + Materials benefit.

Key Findings

- Membership increased from 2008 to 2009 by 1.2 percent, while exams increased by 5.6 percent, for a net increase of 4.3 percent.
- Overall, 24 percent of members went in for an exam in 2008 and 25.1 percent in 2009.
- On average, 25.8 percent of adults and 21.7 percent of children went in for exams.

Utilization results also vary between plan designs. As Figure 1 indicates, when an exam is associated with a materials benefit and sold as a stand-alone vision plan, one-third of the members receive an exam.

This is double the utilization when exams are embedded in a medical plan or included in Medicare/Medicaid plans. When the plan is an Exam-only benefit, very few members receive the exam.

	Members	Exams	Utilization %
Exam+Materials Stand-alone	50,253,582	16,721,809	33.3%
Exam+Materials Bundled	7,205,883	1,175,261	16.3%
Exam-only Stand-alone	10,954,779	732,525	6.7%
Exam-only Bundled	5,020,795	352,826	7.0%
Medicare/Medicaid	11,545,621	1,887,183	16.3%
<i>Figure 1 — Utilization by plan design and if embedded in a medical plan</i>			

Note that only 1 in 3 members who receive an exam will do so again the following year when accompanied with a materials benefit and sold separately from a medical plan. Otherwise, roughly 1 in 4 members will go in consecutive years because:

- a. most people seem to follow their materials benefit (typically biennial) when choosing to receive an eye exam and
- b. a higher portion of members actually will go to an eye doctor in any two-year period.

In fact, as Figure 2 indicates, when looking at the percentage of members receiving an eye exam over a two-year period, only an exam with a materials benefit plan which is sold separately from a medical plan has over 50 percent of members receiving an eye exam.

	Members	Unique Patients	Utilization %
Exam+Materials Stand-alone	50,253,582	27,327,180	54%
Exam+Materials Bundled	7,205,883	2,089,363	29%
Exam-only Stand-alone	10,954,779	1,282,081	12%
Exam-only Bundled	5,020,795	650,417	13%
Medicare/Medicaid	11,545,621	3,150,169	27%
<i>Figure 2 — Members receiving an eye exam over a two-year period</i>			

Exam-only plans result in just 12–13 percent of members receiving an exam over a two-year period.

Study Methodology & Limitations

Ten managed vision care plans submitted data representing claim history for more than 86 million members.

The data that was shared included the number of member months and exam utilization both annually and over a two-year period (biennially). The aggregated data was segmented into several categories including:

- Adults and children
- Members and claims in stand-alone vision plans and vision plans embedded within medical plans
- Exam-only plans and Exam + Materials benefit plans.

Also included were Medicare/Medicaid plans for comparison. Children were defined as dependents less than 21 years of age to most closely mimic the existing health care reform legislation. The data included any claims submitted to the vision plan or the vision component of a bundled medical/vision plan. The study period covered calendar years 2008 and 2009.

Each participating company provided self-reported data for this study. While the data was reviewed for inconsistencies and irregularities, ultimately the accuracy was based on how the company reported the data. Additionally, there are a number of other items, including varying coding patterns between providers and whether they submit the claim to the medical plan, the vision plan, or both, different contribution/participation levels between plans, how dependent information is recorded, differences in benefit richness between plan designs and when typically sold with medical plans, economic factors, membership turnover, new enrollment and even school vision screenings, that likely impact these results.

About the NAVCP

The National Association of Vision Care Plans (NAVCP) is the trade association for the Managed Vision Care industry serving as the voice for the vision benefits industry. The mission of the NAVCP is efficient consumer access to quality vision care through promotion and advancement of the vision benefits industry. The NAVCP strives to improve quality and efficiency in the delivery of vision care for consumers and providers and promotes the value and importance of vision care and vision benefits to both consumers and employers. The 16 primary member companies manage extensive networks of vision care providers and include vision benefit coverage to over 75 million Americans.

About Ingenix Consulting

Ingenix Consulting is the premier, data-driven health and human services consulting organization. We are focused exclusively on the health and human services industry (including ancillary benefits) and are working to drive industry change and help clients solve the most complex problems facing the industry. We have over 1,200 consultants who consult to all payers, providers, employers, government agencies and other stakeholders of the health care/benefits chain. No other consulting firm operates on that scale with an exclusive health care focus. Our consultants have deep, yet diverse industry expertise.

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