

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Children's Utilization of the U.S. Military Dental Insurance

Chaffin, J. G., Moss, D., Martin, G., Leiendecker, T., & Mascarenhas, A. K. (2013). Children's utilization of the U.S. Military dental insurance. *Military Medicine*, 178(7), 816-818. doi:10.7205/milmed-d-13-00089

SUMMARY: Claims data were used to assess child utilization of the TRICARE Dental Program for a dental check-up at least once during a period of a year. The majority of children enrolled in the TRICARE Dental Program had at least one dental check-up during the study year. Children of officers and warrant officers had significantly higher odds of utilizing TRICARE Dental Program than children of enlisted rank families.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Children of military officers and warrant officers had higher odds of utilizing TRICARE Dental Program for a dental visit at least once per year than children of an enlisted E1-E4 rank parent.
- Overall, 71% of military children had at least one annual dental visit.
- Sixty-six percent of children from enlisted rank families and 83% of children from officer or warrant officer families utilized TRICARE Dental Program during a year's span.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer workshops to military parents about the TRICARE Dental Program for their children
- Educate military parents on the importance of regular preventative dental care for optimal oral health
- Disseminate information about registering for TRICARE and the services available to military families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that advocate for all children to have had an annual dental exam as part of their requirements for entering school each year
- Continue to support programs that provide some incentive for military children to have annual dental exams
- Encourage collaboration among DoD and community-based dental offices to coordinate and streamline dental care

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- A secondary data analysis was conducted to determine the rates at which military children utilize the TRICARE Dental Program.
- Claims data from February 1, 2010 – January 31, 2011 were utilized for the current study.
- Age and gender of child, as well as military rank, age, and gender of sponsor were included in the data file.

PARTICIPANTS

- Data from 378,681 military children world-wide who were continuously enrolled in TRICARE dental program were examined.
- Children were between the ages of 1-18 years (mean= 10 years).
- No other demographic data were provided (e.g., gender, race, service branch).

LIMITATIONS

- This study does not take into consideration military children who may utilize private dental insurance for dental visits, which limits generalizability of results.
- Limited participant statistics were reported, so we do not know whether there are different TRICARE dental program utilization rates among the different branches of the military.
- This study used military rank as a proxy for socio-economic status, but never explicitly measured socio-economic status (i.e., through family income), which may bias results.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate the barriers to military families utilizing TRICARE dental services
- Examine differences in TRICARE dental program utilization rates associated with child's age, branch of military, and geographical location
- Include different measures of socio-economic status, including pay scale or household income

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>