



Paper #8

Does Medicare 3-day Rule Increase Length of Stay?

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Introduction: Medicare will only cover transfer to a skilled nursing facility (SNF) if it follows a hospital inpatient stay of at least 3 days. The 3-day stay rule was instituted in 1965 to prevent improper and excessive utilization of the SNF benefits. The purpose of this study was to evaluate if this rule increase length of stay after total knee arthroplasty.

Methods: From a consecutive cohort of 800 TKA done during 2011 we analyzed patients who were discharged to SNF after surgery. Medicare recipients were matched with those who were privately insured.

Results: A total of 322 patients were discharged directly to SNF after surgery. There were 209 Medicare patients and 113 Private patients. The LOS was 2.3 days for privately insured patients and 3.02 for Medicare recipients ($p < 0.05$). No difference was found with regards to age, BMI, and ASA score.

Conclusion: Medicare 3 days rule increase the length of stay on patients that needs SNF by 0.72 days when compared to patients who were privately insured. In the current medical economic climate, we recommend that this outdated rule needs to be revised in order to decrease the cost of TKA.

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