

Scientific Study

The Economy of Chronic Fatigue

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If finances tire you, consider what fatigue does to finances.

Approximately 800,000 adults in the U.S. are diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). People with CFS suffer diminished functionality and increased economic impact, often with a reduction in work and family life activities as well as an increase in health care costs .

The economic impact of an illness is generally broken down into direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include the medical care, prescriptions, and other expenses for ambulatory support. Indirect costs include the loss of work or reduced work due to disability and other costs.

The annual cost of direct expenses related to CFS is estimated at \$2,342 - \$8,675 per patient, or between \$2 - \$7 billion in America alone.

The total cost to society for direct and indirect costs was estimated to \$18 to \$24 billion dollars. This figure includes indirect expenses.

Jason and his colleagues state, “These cost estimates in combination with high prevalence rates are some of the reasons that more re-

search into the cause, effective diagnosis, and treatment are necessary.”

Indeed that is the case. For both patients and society, CFS has a substantial economic impact. In addition to the economic impact, utilization of service providers is often high which puts a burden on the medical care system.

It is indeed crucial that more research be conducted. It is also crucial that service providers familiarize themselves with CFS and work towards better diagnoses. The longer a patient goes without a proper diagnosis, the larger the burden on the medical system, society, and the patient. Once a diagnosis is made, treatment can ensue and repeated consults will be reduced.

It is therefore most crucial that research and proper diagnosis be addressed. Simply putting off a fatigued patient without adequate testing hurts everyone involved.

It is essential to go beyond the medical mantra of “first do no harm” and into a new realm of “first do some good”.

Reference

Jason, LA, Benton, MC, Valentine, L, Johnson, A. The Economic impact of ME/CFS: Individual and societal costs. *Dynamic Medicine*. 2008;April 8;7:6.

