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THE COST OF ENDOMETRIOSIS IN AUSTRALIA

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Objectives: This study estimates the cost of endometriosis in Australia. It is estimated that 560,000 reproductive-aged women are affected by endometriosis. Endometriosis is frequently associated with decreased health-related, Quality of Life (HRQoL), increased chronic pain and pain-associated distress. Decreased HRQoL and increased pain is associated with rising health costs to society.

Design: This epidemiological study surveyed electronically available data to explore direct healthcare and indirect costs associated with endometriosis. These costs may be directly borne by the healthcare budget, government subsidies, private health insurance, employers and individuals or households. Indirect costs are often met by support organisations, familial and social networks.

Materials and Methods: This study was conducted by extrapolating European and North American cost-of-illness study outcomes to Australian healthcare data. This data was collected by interrogating the Australian Bureau of Statistics website for population data and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website for Australian Hospital Statistics 2010-2011 and Chronic Disease Statistics.

Results: This study suggests that endometriosis costs Australian society \$7.7 billion annually. Approximately two thirds of these costs are attributed to loss in productivity, with the remainder - about \$2.5 billion - being direct healthcare costs. Comparatively, diabetes costs about \$1 billion annually in direct healthcare costs and is identified as one of the twelve most burdensome chronic conditions in Australia. Chronic pain is also burdensome; costing about \$34 billion annually or \$11,000 per person with chronic pain. By comparison, the overall cost of endometriosis per woman is approximately \$13,000 annually. These costs may be met by a combination of funding mechanisms; both government and private.

Conclusion: Detailing the burden of endometriosis from a cost perspective is an important tool in optimising funding allocation and government support. In Australia, available data strongly suggests that endometriosis adds a significant, 'silent' burden to the nation's budget. A cost-of-illness study in Australia is a key area for future research.

Keywords: Australia, cost-of-illness, endometriosis