

NATIONWIDE VARIATION IN CATARACT SURGERY AND INTRAVITREAL INJECTION

Purpose: Intravitreal injection and cataract surgery are two common ophthalmic procedures performed in Australia. Intravitreal injection may be considered a marker of advanced ophthalmic care due to the requirement of specialized investigations and medications. Cataract surgery is an indicator procedure of basic ophthalmic care. We compared the demographic and geographic distributions of these two indicator procedures in Australia in the past decade with an aim to inform future allocation of healthcare resources.

Method: Based on data from Medicare Australia and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, we calculated the numbers of intravitreal injection and cataract surgery performed per million population from 2007 to 2016, and the numbers of these procedures provided per ophthalmologist in each state from 2011 to 2014 in Australia.

Results: The number of intravitreal injections performed per million population has overtaken that of cataract surgery in the past decade. People aged 85 and above were the main group that received intravitreal injections, whilst cataract surgeries were mainly performed on people aged 75 to 84. Northern Territory and Tasmania had the lowest and the highest rates of cataract surgery and of intravitreal injection, respectively. On average, ophthalmologists in Tasmania performed the most cataract surgeries and intravitreal injections per year.

Conclusion: Our comparison of the trends of two ophthalmic indicator procedures has identified the differential demands from different age groups and the disparities of ophthalmic procedures performed among the states. We hope that the data presented will guide future allocation of healthcare resources and ophthalmic workforce in Australia.