

Northeast tops insurance coverage, use

A study released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services suggests a correlation between health insurance coverage and physician visits.

According to the December 1989 report, "Regional Variation in Insurance Coverage," the insurance offered to employees differs among geographic regions. Coverage differences affect how health services are being used.

The study indicated that the Northeast states, where residents are most likely to seek care, also have the highest percentage of privately insured persons from 1984 to 1988.

The report also indicates that in providing this type of extensive health insurance coverage, the Northeast has fallen behind other regions in formulating alternative strategies for curbing unnecessary physician visits.

In general, the study found that regions which offer less extensive insurance coverage have lower hospitalization rates. It concludes that "employers have not done enough to control health care costs," say researchers Michael Morrissey, Ph.D., of the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Gail A. Jensen, Ph.D., of Wayne State University. "Employee health benefits generally expanded and deductibles merely kept pace with increases in medical care costs during the study period."

Moderate exercise for pregnant women

Moderate exercise has no significant adverse effects on healthy pregnant women according to a study published in the January/February 1990 *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing*.

Researchers Eileen Greif Fishbein, RN, DNSc, of Georgetown University School of Nursing and Mary Phillips, RN, MS, of Frederick Community College in Frederick, Maryland, state in the study, "regular mild exercise, such as walking, and weight-supported activities, such as swimming and bicycling, are not

only acceptable, but should be encouraged (for pregnant women)."

When these exercises are performed on a regular basis, they positively affect self image, psychological state, weight management, bowel function, muscle tone, and joint flexibility.

The study warns that exercise is not encouraged for women who have diseases in the cardiovascular, respiratory or endocrine systems. Furthermore, pregnant women should particularly avoid dehydration and hyperthermia, meet increased nutritional needs, and elevate their legs after exercise.

The journal recommends that pregnant women should wear supportive bras, appropriate shoes, and clothing that promotes heat loss whenever exercising. In addition, women should consult their physicians before beginning any exercise program.

Child poverty bibliography offered

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) compiled an annotated bibliography of books and reports addressing the issue of child poverty.

NCCP is offering the bibliography for professional and academic use. It will be updated periodically.

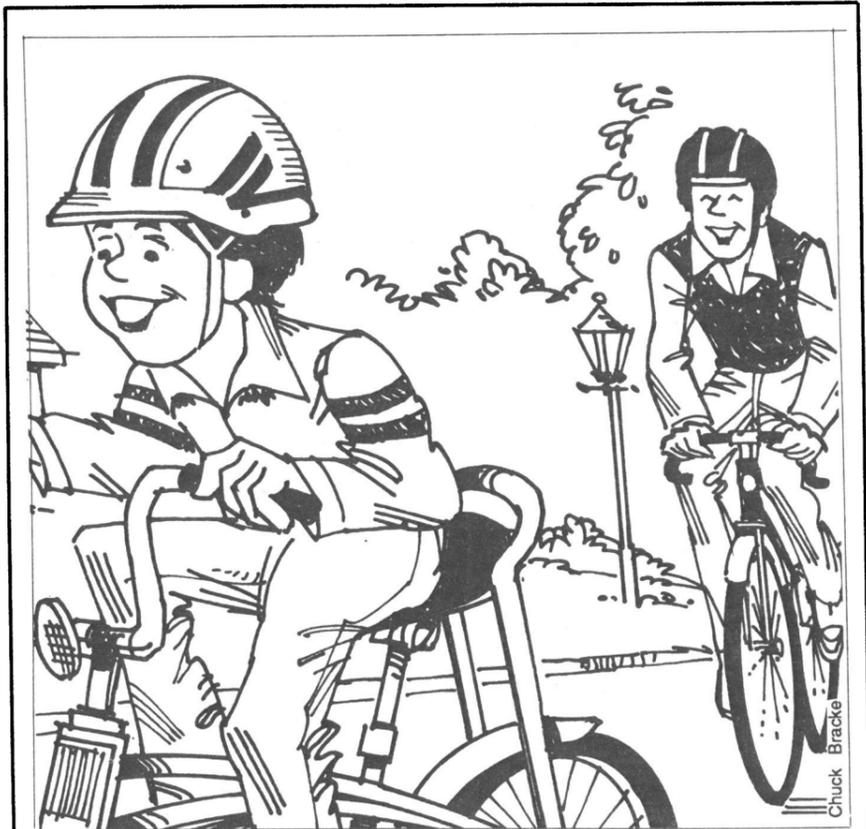
The bibliography entries come from current national publications. Local reports and periodicals are not included.

For a free copy, contact: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, 154 Haven Avenue 3rd floor, New York, NY 10032.

School-based clinics

Inner-city adolescents using school-based health clinics are most likely to seek treatment for acute illnesses or accidents and mental health services, according to a recent published report in *Advances*, a newsletter of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

In its report, RWJF based its findings on a two-quarter comparison of patient visits occurring at 24 of the foundation-sponsored school-based health centers.



Bike helmet survey

About 275 parents of children ages 12 years and younger were asked whether they are aware of the need to wear bicycle helmets. Among the parent responses:

- Only six of every 10 parents were aware that bicycle safety helmets exist.
- Some 58 percent of children ages 12 years and younger ride bicycles. About 14 percent of children younger than six years ride bikes. About 75 percent of children older than six years ride bicycles.
- Seven percent of the parents report that their children ever wear bicycle helmets.
- Bicycle helmet use declines with age. Only 5 percent of 6- to 12-year-olds who ride bikes wear helmets.
- Among children who own bicycle helmets, 75 percent wear usually wear them.

Source: Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Omnibus Study on Incidence of Awareness and Ownership of Children's Bicycle Helmets

Analysis of the visits found that the largest proportion of students were diagnosed or served by the clinics for acute illness or accidents (25 percent), followed by mental health-related needs and miscellaneous routine services, such as vision or hearing screening or immunizations.

The report did not support some community and religious groups' contentions that the clinics are used primarily for their reproductive health services — specifically, abortion counseling and birth control.

Program co-director Julia Lear, Ph.D., noted that abortions and abortion referrals are never provided by any RWJF-funded school clinic, and only a few provide birth control if such a service is deemed necessary by the community advisory committee each clinic is required to establish.

According to the report, reproductive health services accounted

for 10 percent to 13 percent of all visits. Other findings include:

- Patient volume at the clinics continues to expand. Teens' return visits constitute a growing percentage of these clinic use.
- Many visits require more than 20 minutes (44 percent). Ten percent of the teens require less than 10 minute clinic visits.
- Students were more likely to use the clinic for physical exams (often needed for job or sports requirements) during the first school quarter (26 percent) than the third quarter (12 percent).

Editor's note: Health Briefs summarizes journal and magazine articles, news reports, child health statistics and new resources of interest to pediatricians and parents. To submit a Health Brief, contact: "Health Briefs," AAP News, 141 Northwest Point Blvd., P.O. Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927; (800) 433-9016

Health Alert

Flavoring allergy

Oscar Mayer Foods Corporation announced it has stopped using a USDA-approved flavoring ingredient that might cause an allergic reaction in certain individuals.

The company said it is voluntarily withdrawing the milk-derived ingredient after learning that it may cause a reaction in those allergic to milk protein.

The ingredient, used in the company's meat wieners and beef bologna, was removed January 12. Individuals allergic to milk protein should avoid these products labeled with freshness expiration dates of March 28 or before.

For more information, contact: Oscar Mayer Consumer Affairs, (800) 222-2323.

Graco walkers

Graco Children's Products is warning consumers of the possible dangers associated with decorative labels affixed to the tray or base of some models of its infant walkers.

The company has received notification of a number of incidents in which children have removed and ingested labels. No serious injuries are reported.

The specific products involved in the warning contain the logos "Graco," "Wonder Walker," "Tot Wheels," "Tot Wheels II," "Tot Wheels III," and "Disney Babies."

For more information, contact Graco Children's Products, P.O. Box 100, Elverson, PA 19520; (800) 345-4109.

Award nominees sought

The Maternal and Child Section of the American Public Health Association is accepting nominations for its Young Professional Award.

The award is presented annually to an individual younger than 40 years of age who has made a significant contribution to the field of maternal and child health. Candidates making con-

tributions in the areas of administration, advocacy, clinical care, community service, education and research are considered.

For nominating information, contact: Lorraine V. Klerman, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Yale School of Medicine, 60 College Street — P.O. Box 3333, New Haven, CT 06510; (203) 785-2855.