

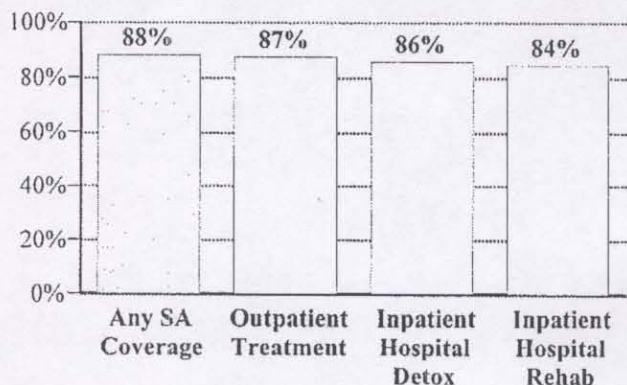
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

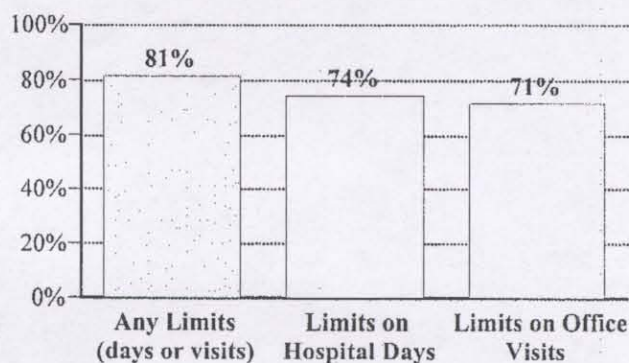
Majority of Insured Workers with Substance Abuse Treatment Benefits Belong to Plans That Limit the Amount of Care Allowed, A Practice "Virtually Unknown in Medical Care"

The majority (88%) of workers with job-based health insurance had some coverage for substance abuse (SA) treatment in 2006, according to a survey of public and private U.S. employers. The most common forms of SA treatment covered were outpatient treatment (87%), inpatient hospital detoxification (86%), and inpatient hospital rehabilitation (84%). However, most (81%) of these employees with coverage for SA benefits belonged to plans that limited the number of hospital days and/or office visits allowed for SA treatment (see figures below). The average number of hospital days permitted was 34 per year and 87 per lifetime while the average number of office visits allowed was 34 per year and 68 per lifetime (data not shown). Noting that "such limits in visits and days are virtually unknown in medical care" (p. w478), the authors conclude that "the SA benefit design encourages short stays through caps and other limits, which in some cases may result in inadequate treatment" (p. w481).

While the Majority of Insured Workers Have Substance Abuse (SA) Treatment Benefits . . .



Most Plans Limit the Number of Hospital Days or Office Visits Allowed



NOTES: Data are from a special supplement to the 2006 Kaiser/HRET Employer Health Benefits Survey. Analysis of this data was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Gabel, J.R.; Whitmore, H.; Pickreign, J.D.; Levit, K.R.; Coffey, R.M.; and Vandivort-Warren, R. "Substance Abuse Benefits: Still Limited After All These Years," *Health Affairs* 26(4):w474-w482, 2007. Published online 7 June 2007. For more information, contact Jon Gabel at Gabel-Jon@norc.org.

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