

Social Sciences(None)

# An International Comparison of Medical Expenses for the Aged

Akiko TAKEUCHI

*Master's Program in Medical Informatics Graduate School of Medical Professions Kurashiki,  
Okayama, 701-0193, Japan*

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## Abstract

Japan is urgently seeking to restructure the national medical insurance and treatment system because of recent, rapid and unacceptable increases in the cost of the program. Medical care provided by the Japanese national health insurance system has been well regarded in the international community for its highly developed medical practice and low cost, about \$2 billion a year (1991). A study of medical costs shows that the United States ranks highest, with Greece last and Japan in the 18th place among 22 OECD countries (Organization For Economic Cooperation & Development) (1987-1990). However, the number of elderly has risen in Japan to 18.5% of the population and the normal reasons for hospitalization have been changed to include "social hospitalization", causing a rapid escalation in costs. This study compared factors related to the average medical expenses within the national medical treatment system and their relationship with added costs due to the increase in elderly persons. These comparisons were contrasted with medical systems in Europe and America to clarify factors characteristic of the Japanese model.

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