Introduction

Medicare reimbursement is a complex topic with many factors affecting total payment. One factor included in each Medicare reimbursement payment calculation is the geographic practice cost index (GPCI). In this study, we analyze the geographical reimbursement differences in spine surgery for neurosurgeons from 2000 and 2019.

Methods

Utilizing the most recent data from the American College of Surgeons’ National Surgical Quality Improvement Project database, the 10 most commonly billed CPT codes in spinal neurosurgery were determined. Using the Physician Fee Schedule Look-Up Tool, reimbursement values for each procedure were extracted from 2000 and 2019 and analyzed.

Results

As seen in figure 1, from 2000 to 2019, the four states with the largest decrease in reimbursement after adjusting for inflation are North Carolina (-45.15%), South Dakota (-42.77%), Hawaii (-42.53%), and Idaho (-41.76%). The four states with the smallest decrease in reimbursement average after adjusting for inflation are Ohio (-12.87%), Florida (-13.36%), Connecticut (-13.76%), and Alaska (-14.53%).

As seen in figure 2, for 2019, the four states with the highest reimbursement average for included procedures are Alaska ($1808), New York ($1660), Florida ($1651), and Montana ($1591) as seen in figure 2. The four states with the lowest reimbursement averages are Mississippi ($1247), Nebraska ($1256), Indiana ($1274), and Iowa ($1277).

Discussion

Our results show large variations in neurosurgeon reimbursement depending on geographic location. A comprehension of these trends by physicians and hospitals in each state is necessary to ensure sufficient access to Medicare funding across all geographic areas.

Summary Points

- Medicare reimbursement is influenced by geographic location
- Some states have seen substantial decreases in reimbursement from 2000 to 2019, such as North Carolina and South Dakota.
- There are large state differences in reimbursement based on 2019 values. For example, surgeons from Alaska are paid $1808 on average for included procedures, while surgeons from Mississippi are paid $1247 on average.