The Hows and Whys of Health Services Research and Costs of Birth Defects
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Health services research studies are needed to address several major issues related to birth defects: outcomes, treatment effectiveness, access to care, racial and socioeconomic disparities, and health-related quality of life. Health services research is also critical in helping determine the timeliness of services and cost of care among children with birth defects. Findings from health services research studies can be useful in developing policies and effective interventions to improve healthcare delivery, quality, and efficiency and to optimize the health outcomes and well-being of affected children and their families. However, very few studies have been conducted that examine health service use and costs among children with birth defects.

This session will include participants from academic institutions, state birth defects surveillance programs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Panelists will discuss several cost perspectives, such as the health care system, societal and payer perspectives. Panelists will also discuss the definitions of direct and indirect costs and how best to measure these costs. Discussion will focus on national and state population-based birth defects surveillance and administrative data sources, data linkages, and health service use and costs that enable conducting large-scale health services research for birth defects. The panelists will summarize recent studies to illustrate the implications of health services research and cost studies. Panelists will also discuss analytic challenges in health services research from the North Carolina Birth Defects Monitoring Program and Florida Birth Defects Registry. Lastly, health services research priorities for future studies will be addressed.

The purposes of this panel are to discuss the importance of health services research and costs of birth defects and to describe recommended methods for health services research and cost studies for birth defects. Another purpose is to address current challenges with health services research and health economics questions. The overall goal of the panel is to help audience members gain a better understanding of health services research, which may help participants engage policymakers and other stakeholders on related issues.