

A MEDICAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

A COMMISSIONER'S APPROACH TO MANAGING UNWARRANTED VARIATION

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In summary: Bupa Health Funding is the largest health insurer in the UK and is committed to making quality healthcare affordable and accessible for the benefit of patients.

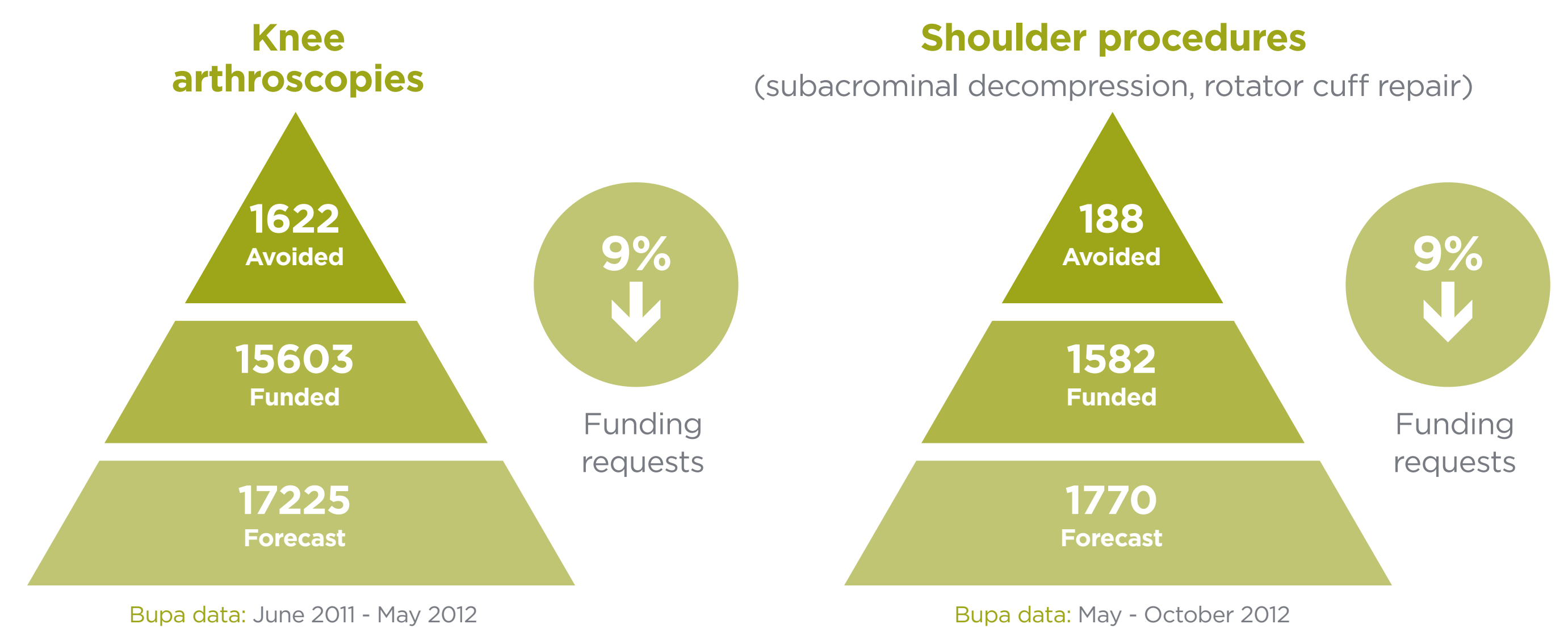
Bupa occasionally observes wide, unexplained variations in the way some physicians and surgeons treat conditions in the private sector, which is not explained by clinical need, patient preference or capacity and trends within the health system capacity.

For example, when compared with the NHS in England, Bupa insured patients were at least three times more likely to undergo knee arthroscopy (2011), three times more likely to undergo arthroscopic subacromial decompression (2012), and eight times more likely to have an extensive open rotator cuff repair (2012). To identify the reasons for these unexplained variations Bupa analysed and benchmarked intervention rates using risk-adjusted statistical comparison, requiring rigorous clinical mapping of different coding systems.

Aim: To ensure Bupa's funding policies support customers to access treatment in line with published medical evidence and clinical guidelines.

Methods: Bupa introduced evidence-based medical reviews to manage funding requests for knee arthroscopy, rotator cuff tear repair and subacromial decompression. Before implementation, Bupa wrote to relevant surgeons, hospitals and professional associations to highlight the observed variations and discuss the approach. Medical reviews were introduced using specialist support teams. Funding requests which did not meet evidence-based criteria were independently peer-reviewed by consultant orthopaedic surgeons.

Results:



Conclusions: An evidence-based funding policy supported by a medical review process reduces the risk of overtreatment with no evidence of detrimental impact on patient outcomes. This supports Bupa to maintain patient safety and steward insured customers' funds appropriately.

Presenting Author: Bentley, A **Affiliation:** Bupa Health Funding, London, UK
Knee arthroscopy co authors: Perry A, Longman N, Sourlas, N, Posnett, H, Mukhtar, S.
Rotator cuff tear repair and subacromial decompression co authors: Woodman T, Longman N, Sourlas, N, Posnett, H, Mukhtar, S.

Our methodology:



Bupa's purpose is longer, healthier, happier lives. A leading international healthcare group, we serve over 14 million customers in more than 190 countries. We offer personal and company-financed health insurance and medical subscription products, run hospitals, provide workplace health services, home healthcare, health assessments and chronic disease management services. We are also a major international provider of nursing and residential care for older people.