**THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE (RHD) IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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***OBJECTIVES***: Due to the paucity of data describing Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) economic impact, we conducted a survey to investigate the household’s economic consequences of RHD in South Africa.

***METHODS***: A cost-of-illness study was undertaken among 100 households affected by RHD in Cape Town. Healthcare costs, including direct and indirect costs, were estimated from a patient (household) perspective. The prevalence of coping strategies was also assessed, including both cost prevention and cost management strategies.

Economic costs were valued in United State dollar (USD).

***RESULTS***: One hundred index patients with RHD were included; supplementary socioeconomic data on household members (n = 479) were also collected. Healthcare costs totalled USD 9400 (USD 91 per patient per year), comprising USD 4285 in direct costs (all of which were direct non-medical costs) and USD 5126 in indirect costs. Total inpatient (52% of direct costs and 39% of indirect costs) and outpatient (48% of direct costs and 61% of indirect costs) costs were estimated at USD 4200 and USD 5200 respectively. At 10% and 40% threshold, 4 and 8 percent of households incurred catastrophic health expenditure. Coping behaviours were frequent and included taking out loans (17% of households), receiving gifts from others (15%). The estimated economic value of these behaviours was estimated at USD 3000. The total cost of RHD to the average affected household is valued at about USD 120 annually

***CONCLUSIONS***: The economic impact of RHD in South Africa is substantial despite government efforts to provide subsidized health care. A broader and more robust range of social policies is required to mitigate non-medical and indirect costs and reduce distortions in household economic activity.