APPLICATION OF BALANCING TECHNIQUES IN STUDIES UTILIZING GERMAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEALTHCARE DATA

Meise D, Kohlscheen KM, Jacob C, Braun S
Xcenda GmbH, Hannover, Germany

BACKGROUND

- Large administrative healthcare data sets are increasingly used in observational studies to estimate the effects of health-related outcomes for specific diseases, treatments and interventions.1,2
- In comparison to randomized controlled trials, where the randomization ensures that treated and untreated patients do not differ systematically from each other, retrospective database studies are prone to selection bias when comparing effects between groups.
- Hence, to adjust for selection bias, researchers often apply matching or weighting techniques.3
- The aim of this study was to assess the use of these techniques in studies using German administrative healthcare data.

METHODS

- In May 2017, a systematic literature review via the electronic database PubMed was conducted to assess the application of matching and weighting techniques in studies based on German administrative healthcare data.
- Relevant articles were identified via keywords linking the terms “matching” or “weighting” with various synonyms for administrative healthcare data and Germany.
- Titles and abstracts and where necessary full texts were screened by two independent researchers. The studies were stratified by year of publication, type of used data, category of study objective (eg, burden of disease) and applied methodology (eg, propensity score matching or weighting).

RESULTS

- In total, 363 studies were identified via the applied search algorithm. After screening of titles, abstracts and full-texts, 114 studies were included for the subsequent analyses (Figure 1).
- The growing significance of administrative healthcare data for German healthcare research is evident by the increasing number of studies over the course of time that was also reported elsewhere (Figure 2).

CONCLUSIONS

- In accordance with the purpose of administrative healthcare data, the most frequent study objectives included cost analyses followed by burden of disease assessments and studies on healthcare resource utilization (Figure 3).
- Direct matching approaches based on variables such as age and gender were used in almost two thirds of the studies (62%), while matching on the propensity score was applied in roughly one third of the analyses (35%) (some studies used more than one approach and hence were counted multiple times) (Figure 4).
- Weighting techniques such as inverse probability of treatment weighting or newer approaches such as entropy weighting were rarely incorporated.

REFERENCES

1. TRICCO A., PHAM B., RAWSON N. 2009 Manitoba and Saskatchewan administrative health care utilization databases are used differently to answer epidemiologic research questions. Journal of Clinical Epidemiology 61, 192–7.