

The Effect of Colorectal Cancer Screening Coverage Required by US State Laws

Abstract

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (2017) advises individuals between 50-75 years old to routinely screen for colorectal cancer. This is because it provides them with the opportunity to prevent the cancer via the removal of pre-cancerous colorectal polyps or detect and treat while it is at an earlier stage. Many do not, however, adhere to the advice. Several states in the US have introduced law that forces health insurers to cover the costs of colorectal cancer tests to deal with this issue. This analysis uses a regression discontinuity design to study the effectiveness of these laws. The results show that they do not encourage low income individuals to screen but that the probability a high income individual screens increases by around 6 to 17 percentage points. The laws can foster screening for the cancer, however, they may not affect all individuals. This study may assist policy makers from countries who intend to introduce or amend similar policies to ensure a widespread effect.

JEL classification: I18

Keywords: colorectal cancer screening coverage; regression discontinuity design

This is a preliminary draft. Please do not cite or circulate.

Nikola Jovanoski
University of Basel
