

More Consultations, Less Talking Medicine: Evidence of the Swiss Physician Reimbursement Reform*

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WORK IN PROGRESS

December 9, 2019

Abstract

In October 2014 the Swiss TARMED reform improved the financial standing of general practitioners, including pediatricians, at the expense of specialists. The reform entitled general practitioners to bill an additional 9 CHF per consultation. At the same time, it reduced fees for certain technical services. This reform provided general practitioners with an incentive to increase consultations per patient and to decrease their duration. Using monthly insurance claims panel data aggregated at the physician praxis level, for 2013-2015, we run panel data difference in difference models with physician and time fixed effects in order to test for the causal effects of the reform. The treatment group is formed by GPs and the control group by specialists who were not intensely affected by the reform. Controlling for physician characteristics such as age, gender, specialty, and physician experience, we confirm the theoretical expectations. We find an increase in the number of consultations per patient and a decrease in their duration. However, running an event study, we find that the effects fade over time.

JEL Classification: I18, I11, H51

Keywords: Financial incentives, Physician Behavior, Health care reform

*Financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation for the SNF project NRP_74 ‘Smarter GP Reimbursement’ is gratefully acknowledged.

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