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# The Impact of Medicaid Enrollment Expansion on the Health Well-being of Social Security Beneficiaries

*Research conducted by Bahareh Eftekhari, Howard University, August 2022*

The Impact of Medicaid Enrollment Expansion on the Health Well-being of Social Security Beneficiaries

This paper aims to understand the effect of the state-wide expansion of Medicaid on Social Security beneficiaries to provide the first descriptive study of the health well-being of this group who also has Medicaid coverage.

## **Does Medicaid expansion improve the health well-being of SS beneficiaries?**

Medicaid is a necessary source of supplemental healthcare coverage for Social Security beneficiaries, however, there are various regulations in place regarding eligibility to receive Medicaid for these low-income people in different states across the country. Social Security beneficiaries are more likely to need Medicaid coverage since they are more vulnerable given their relatively lower income, standard of living, and health condition. Therefore, these regulations effect the health of Social Security recipients in the states with more restrictive Medicaid policies (e.g., a separate Medicaid application). In this study, we use data from Current Population Survey (CPS) and Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to understand the effect of the state-wide expansion of automatic enrollment on Social Security beneficiaries and to provide the first descriptive study of the health well-being of Social Security beneficiaries who have Medicaid coverage. This research investigates the following research questions: (i) Did the health of Social Security beneficiaries improve in the states with Medicaid expansion in place versus the states without? (ii) Which group within Social Security beneficiaries had their health condition impacted due to Medicaid expansion? And are there average differences in reported health of our demographic? This research will facilitate a better understanding of the causal effects of Medicaid policy regimes on the health well-being of Social Security recipients across different states.



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## Positive Impact of Medicaid Expansion on the Health Conditions of SS Beneficiaries

The focus of this study is to understand the relationship between Medicaid expansion regulations and the health status of Social Security beneficiaries in the different states between 2011 to 2015. Our results confirm that Medicaid expansion had a positive effect on the health condition of the target group. The expansion of Medicaid in 28 states in 2014 provided a unique opportunity for causality estimation of the effect of Medicaid expansion on the health well-being by analyzing the differences in pre- and post-Medicaid expansion. Our findings show evidence that the expansion of Medicaid is associated with an increase in the probability of improving the level of health well-being for those with Social Security income and Social Security disability income benefits. However, this study shows that there might be a delayed effect of Medicaid expansion on the health well-being of these beneficiaries since this study was able to assess the health condition only one year after the expansion in 2014. Therefore, future research should explore the effect of Medicaid expansion on health condition of Social Security participants over a longer period, given that health related effects can take a long time to become apparent. Our results illustrate the importance of policies that expand Medicaid across the country. Medicaid can be expanded in all states to cover a higher percentage of the population. As more people are covered by health insurance, the overall health of the nation would be improved.

### Implications

- The probability of improvement in health conditions, due to Medicaid expansion, is lower among African American households in comparison to White people.
- There is a significant positive relationship between educated people and their health condition as we compare the pre- and post-Medicaid expansion periods.
- The health condition improvement among unemployed people was less than those who are employed from pre-Medicaid expansion to post-Medicaid expansion period.
- The expansion of Medicaid is associated with an increase in the probability of improving the level of health well-being for those with Social Security income.
- Medicaid can be expanded in all states to cover a higher percentage of the population. As more people are covered by health insurance, the overall health of the nation would be improved.

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