

Impact of challenges in basic needs on health care costs

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Public health professionals, health services researchers, policymakers

ABSTRACT:

Background: We examined the impact of challenges in social determinants of health specifically food, clothing, housing, and transportation on health care costs using administrative claims and self-reported data from Medicaid recipients in Portland, Oregon.

Methods: Our sample included 1367 adults with Medicaid coverage during 2013-2015 for at least 6 months who responded to a survey on life course experiences. We performed multivariate regression modeling to examine the association between social determinants challenges and health care costs during in the past year. We controlled for age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, education, and medical complexity. We calculated medical complexity using the Chronic Illness and Disability Payment System algorithm. Analysis was weighted to represent the Portland Metro Area Medicaid population.

Results: Approximately 31.9% (95% CI: 25.4-38.2) and 13.3% (95% CI: 8.7-17.8) of respondents experienced transportation and housing challenges, respectively. Annualized health care costs for respondents with these challenges were \$1249 (p=0.04) and \$865 (p<0.01) higher when compared to those without these challenges.

Conclusion: Housing and transportation challenges in the past year were associated with higher health care costs. Providing housing and non-medical transportation support to Medicaid recipients may result in future costs savings.

OBJECTIVE(S): Assess impact of challenges in social determinants of health on health care costs.

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