

Reimbursement for Influenza Vaccination, Vaccination Rates, and Health Outcomes among the Elderly in Japan

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Abstract:

Complications related to influenza infection can be life-threatening for the elderly and influenza vaccination is an effective tool to protect individuals from serious complications. In Japan, the vaccination rate among the elderly is still below the average of the OECD countries. One of the most obvious ways to encourage vaccination is to provide subsidies. However, There are only a small number of studies on the effect of vaccination subsidies on vaccination uptake among the elderly, and these have produced mixed results. Using regional variations in the amount of vaccination subsidies in the current immunization program in Japan, we examine the impact of subsidies on the vaccination rate as well as on five health outcome measures. Our results show that an increase in the subsidy amount by 1,000 yen leads to a 1 percentage point increase in the vaccination rate among the elderly, suggesting that vaccination subsidies are an effective tool for increasing vaccination rates. On the other hand, we found no substantial effects on health outcomes.

Keywords: subsidies; price elasticities; policy evaluation

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