

## **Empirical Study on the Utilization and Effects of Health Checkups in Japan**

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### **Abstract**

Health checkups has been commonly considered as an important measure to improve population health. Japanese government has made substantial efforts to promote health checkups, including the recently implemented Special Health Checkups (SHC) which covers the whole of the population aged 40-74 years old since 2008. However, there remains a large gap between the actual prevalence and the goals set by the government. Using the Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions (CSLS) survey data from 1995 to 2013 in Japan, we conducted an empirical study to answer three questions: Which factors determinate the prevalence of general health checkups in Japan at the regional level? Which factors determinate the decisions on taking HC at the individual level? Does the Special Health Checkups (SHC) have any effects on various health outcomes? Our results suggest that there exists a great regional disparity in the prevalence of health checkups in Japan, even after controlling various social and economic factors. In addition, despite of the government's efforts, little improvement is observed in the prevalence of health checkups from 1995 to 2013. Moreover, at the individual level, the probability of taking health checkups for irregular workers and the enrollees of the National Health Insurance is smaller than their counterparts. Lastly, although SHC implemented since 2008 appeared to have a positive effect on the probability of taking health checkups, it has little effect on health status, smoking behaviors and medical expenses.

**Keywords:** Health checkups, Special Health Checkups, the *Metabo* Law, Regional disparity, Health outcomes

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