

Impact of Subsidy on Community-wide Health Outcomes: an Example of Influenza Vaccination

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Studies have shown that an extension of financial assistance to receive health care interventions generally improves healthcare utilization, but the reported impact of such programs on health outcomes has been somewhat mixed. Using municipal-level survey data on a subsidy program for influenza vaccination, we examined how the implementation of a subsidy program for influenza vaccination affected regional-level influenza activity. We found that the availability of subsidy was negatively associated with the number of weeks with high alert for influenza outbreak in the neighboring area in all. Given that the greater number of weeks with high alert indicated a severer epidemic, our findings suggested that the availability of subsidy had a positive impact on the community-wide health outcome compared with no subsidy case, contributing to an effective control of regional-level influenza outbreak. The effect was confirmed with another measure of influenza activity that accounted for the number of influenza patients in addition to the duration of an epidemic. Our results suggest that subsidy programs could be effective not only for individuals to have better access to preventive care but also for communities to improve regional-level health outcomes.

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