

Measuring the effects of medication adherence for the Medicare population

ISSUE: Literature on policies aimed at improving medication adherence finds evidence that there are numerous policy interventions that can improve medication adherence. However, only a subset of these policy interventions relates better adherence to better health outcomes, patient satisfaction, health care utilization and costs, and the long-term consequences are still uncertain.

KEY POINTS: This study builds upon the analysis we conducted last year to examine the relationship between adherence to medications and the use of medical services for Medicare beneficiaries. We explore the complexity involved in measuring the effects of medication adherence. Our findings highlight the difficulty in interpreting the estimates of the effects of medication adherence as measured by spending differentials between adherent and non-adherent individuals. The problem may be exacerbated by the more complex health profiles of Medicare population compared with the general population often used in studies of medication adherence.

ACTION: Commissioners should review the findings and comment on the substance of this research.

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