Insurance Coverage, Health Spending, and Beneficiary Out-of-Pocket Costs During and After the Medicare Waiting Period: Evidence from the Colorado All-Payer Claims Database

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Past research shows that the two-year Medicare waiting period (between the SSDI entitlement date and the start of Medicare eligibility) is a time when many beneficiaries are uninsured and can face challenges in accessing health care, despite having very high health care needs relative to the general adult population. State All-Payer Claims Databases (APCDs) offer a new but underutilized source of administrative panel data on health insurance coverage, spending, and out-of-pocket (OOP) costs for entire state populations covered by participating health care payers. This proposed study will use 2012-2018 data from the Colorado All-Payer Claims Database, which combines enrollment and claims data from commercial insurers, Medicaid, Medicare Fee-for-Service, private Medicare plans (such as Medicare Part C and Part D plans), and Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) plans for over 3 million Colorado residents. This sample includes panel data on 44,000 non-elderly adults (aged 22-63) who entered Medicare Part A or Medicare Part C for the first time between 2014 and 2018; those without End-Stage Renal Disease can be assumed to be SSDI beneficiaries.

I will use these data to provide new evidence on SSDI beneficiaries' insurance coverage, health spending, and OOP costs during the Medicare waiting period and in the first year of Medicare enrollment. Using an interrupted time-series design, I will also examine impacts of the major coverage expansions implemented under the Affordable Care Act in 2014 on health spending and OOP costs during the first year of Medicare enrollment, as well as insurance coverage during the waiting period.

This observational study will address **Focal Area #6 (Economic Security of SSA Beneficiaries)** by providing new evidence on insurance coverage, health care spending, and OOP medical spending for SSDI beneficiaries during the Medicare waiting period. This evidence is likely to be more relevant to the current health policy landscape than existing estimates. By measuring SSDI beneficiaries' OOP costs under private insurance and Medicaid, this study will shed light on the *potential benefits for beneficiaries' economic security* that might result from expanding coverage options during the waiting period. Furthermore, by measuring health spending during the waiting period for recent cohorts of SSDI beneficiaries who entered Medicare, and by testing whether increased insurance coverage in the Medicare waiting period was associated with changes in health care spending after Medicare enrollment, this study's findings can also inform debates about *the cost of providing health insurance coverage to SSDI beneficiaries in the Medicare waiting period, net of any potential reductions in pent-up demand* when those beneficiaries enroll in Medicare.

The total budget for this one-year project is $94,190. **This work builds on RDRC project NB20-02**, in which I am using the Colorado APCD to study opioid prescribing and SSDI entry patterns for workers who suffer traumatic injury.