Title: Do SSDI wait time and rejection increase mortality?

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Abstract:

Disability researchers have studied the effect of wait time on employment and earnings, and coping strategies while waiting, but not mortality. Other researchers have studied the economic outcomes of rejected DI applicants, either directly, or indirectly by studying the effect of receiving DI benefits and using denied applicants as a control group. Others still have studied the effect of DI benefits on mortality but used other beneficiaries as the comparison group. This work aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by determining if there is causal evidence that DI wait time and DI rejection lead to increases in mortality.

This study plans to use the Synthetic SIPP Beta (SSB) to answer this research question. The SSB provides individual, monthly level rotating panel data, and allows external researchers access to SSA data that is normally restricted, such as application date for SSDI, date of filing for SSDI, adjudication date, whether the application was rejected or accepted, and date of death. We plan to classify individuals as non-applicants, rejected applicants, and beneficiaries, and use the date variables to determine wait times and mortality. To address endogeneity concerns, this study plans to follow similar methods used in the literature, by using average wait times to instrument for actual wait times, and average allowance rate to instrument for actual rejection.

Focal Area: 4: Economic Security of SSA Beneficiaries: Outcomes for denied SSDI and SSI applicants

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