



# Does Medicare Coverage Improve Cancer Detection and Mortality Outcomes?

## Background

- Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the US.
- Early detection improves outcomes and lowers mortality.
- Uninsured people experience longer delays in diagnosis and poorer health outcomes.
- Medicare provides near universal coverage at age 65.

## Study Overview

- This study provides evidence that near-universal access to health care coverage through Medicare improved the cancer mortality of the population. It is believed to be the first study to do so.
- The study also provides new evidence of how gender differences impact health coverage and treatment.

## Learn More

- Myerson, R.M., Tucker-Seeley, R.D., Goldman, D.P. and Lakdawalla, D.N. (2020), Does Medicare Coverage Improve Cancer Detection and Mortality Outcomes?. *J. Pol. Anal. Manage.*, 39: 577-604. doi:10.1002/pam.22199
- <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22199>

## Key Takeaways

- The study examined breast, colorectal and lung cancers using a regression discontinuity research design. The authors compared detection and mortality rates for these cancers among those slightly younger than 65 and those 65 and slightly older.
- Universal health insurance coverage access improved population level cancer detection and mortality rates.
- At age 65, rates of cancer detection increased by 50 per 100,000 people. Early stage cancers accounted for much of this increase, 33 per 100,000.
- Cancer detection increased 72 per 100,000 for women and 33 per 100,000 for men.
- African-American women experienced an increase of cancer detection rates of 62 per 100,000.
- Also at age 65, cancer mortality decreased by 9 per 100,000 for women. Men did not see a statistically significant change in mortality rates.
- African-American women experienced a decrease in cancer mortality of 20 per 100,000.