

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Special Projects Branch: Linked Medicare

The Special Projects Branch, Data Linkage Team completed a comprehensive data enhancement and research infrastructure project by linking several important NCHS surveys with Medicare enrollment and claims records collected from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Linkage of the NCHS survey participants with the CMS Medicare data provides the opportunity to study changes in health status, health care utilization, and expenditures in the elderly and disabled U.S. population.

Lead Agency:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health
Statistics/Office of Analysis and Epidemiology

Agency Mission:

The mission of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data.

Principal Investigator:

Christine S. Cox, M.S.
Chief, Special Projects Branch
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road, Room 6317
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Partner Agencies:

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

General Description:

NCHS has linked its population based survey data with Medicare enrollment and claims data collected from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). These linked survey files provide the data needed to formulate and answer vital research questions by profiling Medicare service use and assessing health care costs.

Medicare enrollment and claims data are available for those NCHS survey participants who agreed to provide personal identification data to NCHS and for whom NCHS was able to validate and match with Medicare administrative records. CMS provided NCHS with Medicare benefit claims data for 1991 through 2000 for all successfully matched NCHS survey participants.

The following NCHS surveys were linked to Medicare enrollment and claims files:

- 1994-1998 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
- NHANES I Epidemiologic Follow-up Study (NHEFS)
- Second National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES II)
- Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III)
- The Second Longitudinal Study of Aging (LSOA II)

For successfully matched NCHS survey participants, Medicare enrollment and claims information are available from the following CMS files:

- Denominator
- MedPAR Hospital Stay
- MedPAR Skilled Nursing Facility
- Carrier file (formerly the Physician/Supplier Part B file)
- Outpatient
- Home Health Agency
- Hospice
- Durable Medical Equipment

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

The Special Projects Branch within OAE is responsible for conducting record linkage projects, developing linked data files for analytic use, evaluating the linked data and promoting the data for public health and health policy research. Demand for more comprehensive data from the research and public health policy communities coupled with the need for cost-effective data collection efforts, indicates the importance of the development of linked data sets. This project demonstrates the successful collaboration and cooperation between federal agencies to enhance the research infrastructure for aging research.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

Medicare administrative records provide one of the most valuable sources of information on health events, health care utilization and costs for the U.S. population aged 65 years or older. However, Medicare data alone does not provide a complete picture of beneficiary's health status. NCHS population

based surveys linked to Medicare data can provide a more comprehensive view of health status, not only for specific chronic conditions or functioning, but also can provide a longitudinal component to the beneficiary's health status.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

By linking Medicare administrative data with NCHS survey data, researchers and policy makers can improve understanding of the health status, utilization, and expenditure patterns of the Medicare population.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

The linkage of NCHS survey participants to their individual administrative records on Medicare enrollment and claims provide a cost-effective means to enrich and expand the available information on health status, functional limitations, medical care utilization and costs. The linked NCHS-Medicare files provide a single source of data on various domains of interest to researchers that, in general, are difficult to find. For each of the NCHS surveys linked to Medicare administrative records, there are approximately 80 different files available for researchers.