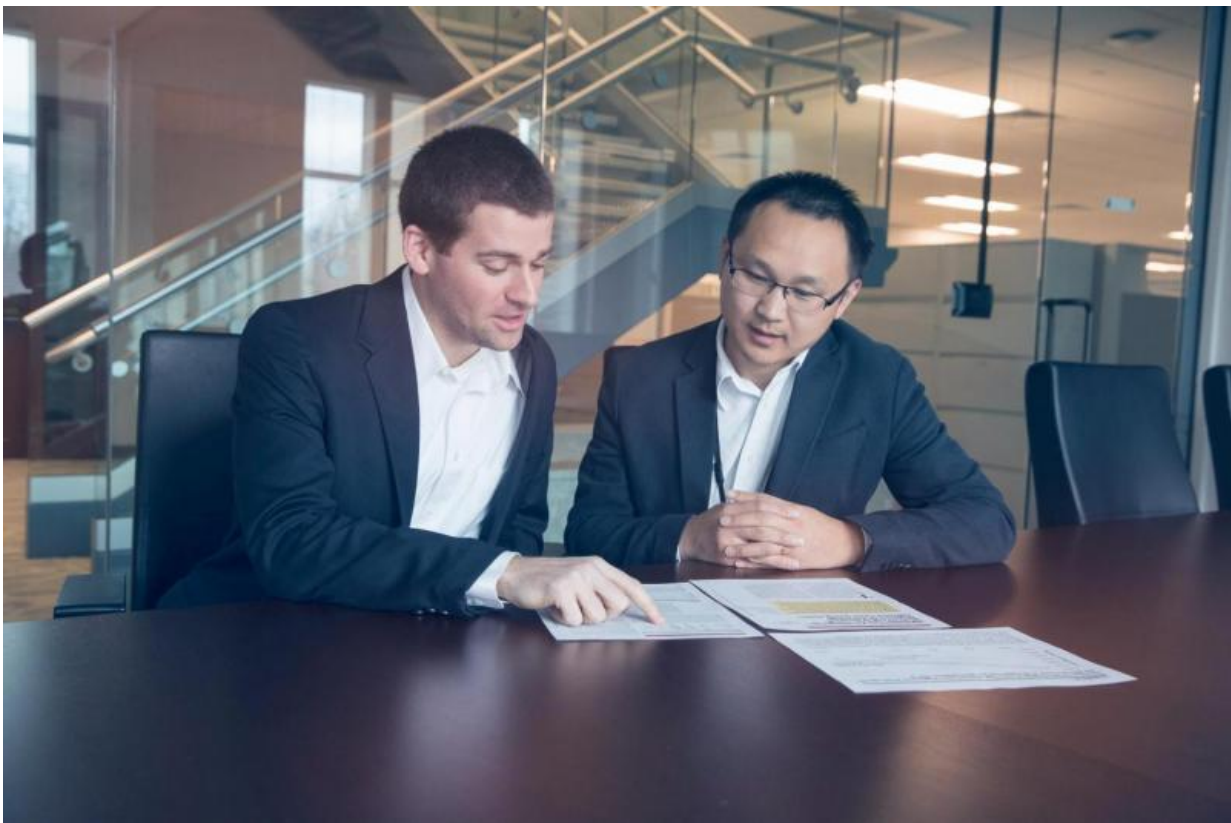


Affordable Care Act made some cancer screenings more accessible, study says

January 18 2017, by Jane Kelly



The study's coauthors are Brett Lissenden, a fifth-year student in UVA's economics Ph.D. program, and Aaron Yao, an assistant professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences. Credit: Dan Addison, University Communications

The Affordable Care Act helped make recommended cancer screening

more affordable and accessible for millions of Americans, according to new University of Virginia research.

A study published in the journal *Health Affairs* and authored by Aaron Yao, an assistant professor in UVA's Department of Public Health Sciences, and Brett Lissenden, a graduate student in UVA's economics Ph.D. program, focused on how the sweeping health care law – commonly referred to as Obamacare – affected early cancer diagnoses, particularly for colorectal and [breast cancer](#).

"The main finding is that from 2011 to 2013, the ACA resulted in an 8 percent increase in the diagnoses of early-stage [colorectal cancer](#) among U.S. seniors aged 65 and older," Lissenden said.

At the same time, the study found the ACA had no distinguishable effect on the number of diagnoses of [early-stage breast cancer](#) over the same time period. Yao and Lissenden believe the ACA initially affected the diagnosis of colorectal cancer more than that of breast cancer because the decrease in out-of-pocket spending was larger for colorectal screening than for [breast cancer screening](#).

Yao stressed that the new study is not politically motivated. "I am not a Democrat or a Republican," he said. "I feel preventable care is very important and we need to promote that."

The pair used population-based data from the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program, which pulls cancer registry data from 18 different registries. "It covers about 28 percent of the U.S. population," Yao said. "It's kind of the gold standard for studying cancer incidences."

The researchers used data for patients diagnosed with their first cancer in the period from 2008 to 2013 and detected the 8 percent increase in

colorectal cancer detection starting in 2011, a year after the Affordable Care Act was signed into law.

More information: Brett Lissenden et al. Affordable Care Act Changes To Medicare Led To Increased Diagnoses Of Early-Stage Colorectal Cancer Among Seniors, *Health Affairs* (2017). [DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0607](https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0607)

Provided by University of Virginia

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