

US states which took Obamacare funding saw more cancer screening

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Cancer—Histopathologic image of colonic carcinoid. Credit: Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 3.0

US states which expanded Medicaid insurance coverage to low-income adults as part of Barack Obama's signature healthcare law saw a marked increase in colorectal cancer screening, a new study said Wednesday.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed excluding skin cancers, according to the American Cancer Society, and its rates have been growing among [younger people](#) in recent years for reasons that are unclear.

The paper, which appeared in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, estimated that if so-called non-expansion states had experienced the same increase in screening that was recorded in early adopter states, an additional 355,184 people would have been covered.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as "Obamacare," was enacted in 2010 and provided federal support for states to expand Medicaid insurance coverage to low-income adults.

Five states and the District of Columbia were very early adopters and expanded Medicaid eligibility in 2010-2011.

An additional 21 expanded their programs in 2014, five more between 2015 and 2016, while 19 chose not to expand their coverage.

Lead researcher Stacey Fedewa at the American Cancer Society examined screening patterns among low-income adults in all states using a telephone survey supervised by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2012, 2014 and 2016.

They found that between 2012 and 2016, the proportion of low-income adults aged 50 to 64 who were up-to-date with screening grew by 8.8 percentage points in very early adopters against 3.8 percentage points in non-expansion states.

"Health insurance is a strong predictor of cancer screening, and the uninsured and those with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be diagnosed at late stage and die from screen-detectable cancers,

including [colorectal cancer](#)," said Fedewa.

More information: *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2019).
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