

The Impact of Informal Care on Health Behavior among Older People with Chronic Diseases: A Study in China Using Propensity Score Matching

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Abstract : Improvement of health behavior among people with chronic diseases is vital for increasing longevity and enhancing quality of life. This paper researched the causal effects of informal care on the compliance with doctor's health advices - smoking control, dietetic regulation, weight control and keep exercising - among older people with chronic diseases in China, which is facing the challenge of aging. We addressed the selection bias by using propensity score matching in the estimation process. We used the 2011-2012 national baseline data of the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study. Our results showed informal care can help improve health behavior of older people. First, informal care improved the compliance of smoking controls: whether smoke, frequency of smoking, and the time lag between wake up and the first cigarette was all lower for these older people with informal care; Second, for dietetic regulation, older people with informal care had more meals every day than older people without informal care; Third, three variables: BMI, whether gain weight and whether lose weight were used to measure the outcome of weight control. There were no significant difference between group with informal care and that without for BMI and the possibility of losing weight. Older people with informal care had lower possibility of gain weight than that without; Last, for the advice of keeping exercising, informal care increased the probability of walking exercise, however, the difference between groups for moderate and vigorous exercise were not significant. Our results indicate policy makers who aim to decrease accidents should take informal care to elders into account and provide an appropriate policy to meet the demand of informal care. Our birth policy and postponed retirement policy may decrease the informal caregiving hours, so adjustments of these policies are important and urgent to meet the current situation of aged tendency of population. In addition, government could give more support to develop organizations to provide formal care, such as nursing home. We infer that formal care is also useful for health behavior improvements.

Keywords : chronic diseases, compliance, CHARLS, health advice, informal care, older people, propensity score matching

Conference Title : ICHEPM 2017 : International Conference on Health Economics, Policy and Management

Conference Location : San Francisco, United States

Conference Dates : September 28-29, 2017