



Informing the Uninformed: How Drug Advertising Affects Check-up Visits

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Objective

- To measure how DTC advertising affects an undiagnosed individual's decision of getting a check-up



Data

- MEPS
 - Nationally representative sample (1997-2004)
 - Individual level data, demographics, visit type
 - Limits to individuals with no prior diagnosis
- DTC advertising data
 - TNS Media Intelligence
 - National level expenditures at the drug level



Findings

- DTC advertising seems to have a positive and significant effect on the probability of a consumer seeking a check-up visit
- Effect of advertising varies by demographic group
- Women with Medicaid insurance and the highly educated are the most responsive groups, while Hispanics are the least responsive



Comments

- Focuses on the undiagnosed group
 - Good approach to capture the DTC effect on check-up visit
 - Previous research hasn't looked at this group
- Studies the DTC effect at various demographic levels
- Uses demographic specific drug ad expenditures



Comments/Questions

- An individual could have multiple check-up visits
 - How to identify check-ups due to DTC versus annual check-ups done as preventive care
 - How to identify check-ups due to DTC versus check-ups due to previous visits with no diagnosis
 - How about visits for acute conditions – are they excluded/included from the sample?



Screening for High Blood Pressure: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation:

“Because of the variability in individual blood pressure measurements, it is recommended that hypertension be diagnosed only after 2 or more elevated readings are obtained on at least 2 visits over 1 to several weeks”



Comments/Questions

- Doesn't account for heterogeneity in consumer's exposure to DTC
- How to differentiate DTC effect from other health information on check-ups?