Employer-Sponsored Health Benefits of Farmworkers: Differences by Documentation Status

Ryan S. Klein and Jessie Kemmick Pintor, University of Minnesota School of Public Health

Background & Research Questions

**Background**
- Crop production agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the United States
- Farmworkers have limited access to health care services
- More than half of farmworkers in the United States lack immigration documentation status (undocumented), making them vulnerable to exploitation by employers
- Undocumented workers generally want to remain anonymous, and thus may be less likely to advocate for health benefits

**Research Questions**
- Do differences in use of health services and access to employer-sponsored health benefits exist by documentation status among farmworkers in the United States?
- Do differences in use of employer-sponsored health benefits exist by documentation status among farmworkers in the United States?

Data, Key Measures, & Methods

**Data**
- National Agricultural Workers’ Survey years 1999-2000
- Nationally representative survey of the crop production workforce

**Key Measures**
- Documentation status of workers
- Employer-sponsored health insurance (ESI) knowledge
- Employer-sponsored health insurance coverage
- Workers’ compensation (WC) wage replacement coverage
- Workers' compensation wage replacement coverage
- Workers’ compensation medical insurance coverage
- Primary payer of medical costs for medical care visits

**Methods**
- Descriptive statistics of farmworkers by documentation status
- Logistic regressions
- Independent predictor is documentation status of worker
- Outcome measures consist of remaining key measures listed above
- Multivariate models estimated to control for confounding
- Models account for complex survey design

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Unadjusted Odds Ratios</th>
<th>Adjusted Odds Ratios</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Knows WC Medical Coverage Status</td>
<td>3.69 (2.35 – 5.76)</td>
<td>3.17 (2.30 – 4.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows WC Wage Replacement Coverage Status</td>
<td>5.52 (4.50 – 6.80)</td>
<td>5.20 (4.40 – 6.05)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to WC Wage Replacement</td>
<td>2.07 (1.30 – 3.35)</td>
<td>1.85 (1.32 – 2.60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knows ESI Offered Status</td>
<td>3.17 (2.30 – 4.39)</td>
<td>3.07 (2.34 – 4.04)</td>
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<td>Was Offered ESI</td>
<td>3.49 (2.48 – 4.90)</td>
<td>3.48 (2.48 – 4.90)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paid for Work Injury / Workers’ Comp</td>
<td>2.10 (1.46 – 3.02)</td>
<td>2.10 (1.46 – 3.02)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paid for Work Injury / Workers’ Comp with WC</td>
<td>3.18 (2.40 – 4.20)</td>
<td>3.18 (2.40 – 4.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid for Non-Work Injury / Workers’ Comp with WC</td>
<td>4.65 (3.18 – 6.97)</td>
<td>4.65 (3.18 – 6.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid for Non-Work Injury / Workers’ Comp without WC</td>
<td>2.52 (1.69 – 3.69)</td>
<td>2.52 (1.69 – 3.69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Logistic Regression Results**

- **Unadjusted Models**
  - Undocumented workers had lower odds of knowing benefits status in all categories
  - Undocumented workers had lower odds of being offered benefits in all categories
  - Undocumented workers had higher odds of paying for care with benefits, however results were not statistically significant

- **Adjusted Models**
  - Undocumented workers had lower odds of knowing WC medical coverage status, and being offered WC medical coverage
  - Undocumented workers had lower odds of being offered ESI
  - All other adjusted associations not statistically significantly different than zero
  - Use of benefits models were not run due to small size of sample subsets

Summary of Findings

- Access to ESI among undocumented farmworkers is increasing in importance as a result of the undocumented immigrant exclusion from health insurance exchanges in the ACA, as well as Medicaid restrictions maintained under the ACA – without these other important pathways to coverage, lack of access to ESI could leave these individuals without access to critical health services
- WC is an important resource for the health and welfare of workers in the event of a work-related injury or illness – undocumented farmworkers appear to be at a disadvantage with regard to knowledge of their access to the program, which again could inhibit access to critical health care and/or wage replacement benefits
- Future research should investigate implications of lack of ESI access on access to health services in this population after full implementation of the ACA
- Future research should address questions with more recent data and with a larger sample

Acknowledgements

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