OBESITY AND MEDICARE EXPENDITURE: ACCOUNTING FOR AGE-RELATED HEIGHT LOSS

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OBJECTIVES: To determine the relationship between body mass index (BMI) and Medicare expenditure for adults 65-years and older and determine whether this relationship changes after accounting for possible misclassification associated with age-related height loss. METHODS: Using a cross-sectional study design, the relationship between BMI and Medicare expenditure was examined among beneficiaries who completed the Current Beneficiary Survey (CBS) conducted by the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) in 2005. A total of 6,701,623 beneficiaries who had a Medicare record in the year 2004 were included in the analysis. RESULTS: A U-shaped association between BMI and Medicare expenditure was observed. BMI was significantly lower in the overweight group and higher in the underweight group compared to those with normal BMI. CONCLUSION: BMI and Medicare expenditure are inversely related in a U-shaped manner. The results suggest that obesity might be beneficial for Medicare expenses in the elderly.