**Estimating the Cost and Effects of Adding a Dental Benefit to Medicare Part B**

The Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act recently introduced into the Senate seeks to expand Medicare to include dental, vision, and hearing services and increase federal matching rates for Medicaid for these services.

According to findings from a microsimulation model by the Urban Institute, adding a dental benefit to Medicare Part B would result in an approximate one-third increase in the use of and spending on dental care for all beneficiaries.

If Medicare Part B was expanded to include comprehensive dental benefits, Urban Institute researchers predict:

* Out-of-pocket spending would fall by $530 per person, from $657 to $127, a reduction of over 80 percent, under the new policy.
* Medicare spending under the new law would increase the most for non-Hispanic white enrollees ($1,032) but significantly less for non-Hispanic Black enrollees ($356), Hispanic enrollees ($530), and non-Hispanic enrollees from all other racial backgrounds ($689).
* Spending increases the most for individuals with incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Line with a 72% increase in dental spending, while those with incomes over 400% of the FPL see only a 20% increase.
* Spending would increase by an estimated $60.1 billion, from $3.6 billion to $63.7 billion, in 2023 from adding a Medicare dental benefit.
* There would be a reduction in supplementary, Medicaid, and out-of-pocket spending for dental care, while overall expenditures on dental care would increase by $19.4 billion, or 34%.

“We conclude that while adding a dental benefit would not solve all access problems or eliminate differences by race and ethnicity,” said lead researcher Anuj Gangopadhyaya, “it would result in a substantial increase in the use of and spending on dental care for all beneficiaries.”

[Hold for quote from funder representative]

The full analysis can be found here: [LINK]