Medicaid Research Partnership

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This summer, a formal partnership between the University of Delaware and the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) was established to facilitate research aimed at improving the health of low-income Delawareans and addressing issues of cost and quality in the healthcare system. The partnership agreement builds upon a strong working relationship that has been developing over the last several years between the University and DHSS’ Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA).

UD researchers in the College of Health Sciences (CHS) and the School of Public Policy & Administration through its Center for Community Research & Service (CCRS) have worked together with DMMA on a variety of projects focused on improving outcomes and reducing healthcare spending for the state’s Medicaid population. With the signing of this agreement, Delaware joins 16 other states that have formed similar state/university partnerships for Medicaid-related research.

Medicaid is the national health insurance program that is jointly funded by each individual state and the federal government to cover low-income children and adults. A quarter of Delaware’s residents, or approximately 240,000 individuals, participate in its Medicaid Program. This population experiences a disproportionate burden of disease and poor health outcomes, and, due to the nature of their needs, per capita healthcare spending for this group tends to be higher than privately insured individuals.

This new partnership agreement establishes an ongoing mechanism for sharing data and allows researchers to expand our current work in many ways that can have a positive impact on the quality and cost of healthcare while at the same time enhancing the overall health of this vulnerable population.

This research partnership will become increasingly important as additional components of the Affordable Care Act go into effect.

Stephen Groff, Director of DMMA said, “this research with the University enhances our capacity to monitor changes in the Medicaid system, evaluate the effectiveness of various program innovations on the quality and cost of the Medicaid program, and implement effective strategies to improve the overall health of Medicaid beneficiaries.”

Recent Medicaid Projects

Over the past several years, CCRS and CHS have conducted Medicaid-related research on a range of health topics including children with asthma, children in the foster care system, individuals with mental health problems, and people with disabilities. Dr. Steven Pequet, director of CCRS, says, “many important studies can now be carried out because Medicaid data is being shared between the State and the University, and is being done in a manner that fully protects the confidentiality of medical records.”

Clearly, the Medicaid Research Partnership is already facilitating collaboration across several different institutions and is attracting important outside funding. For example, CCRS has recently partnered with Dr. Catherine Zorc with the Nemours Children Health System, Dr. Mia Papas, epidemiologist

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Grabelsky’s GIS story map focuses on Freeboard as a floodplain management strategy. This exercise was one facet of his extensive work on Creating Flood-Ready Communities in Delaware, which is showcased within the “Sustainable and Resilient” section of IPA’s online Delaware Complete Communities Planning Toolbox (www.completecommunitiesde.org).

The GIS story maps can be viewed online at IPA’s GIS story map gallery, called Implementing Complete Communities in Delaware (http://arcg.is/25DcjGV). The applied research project work is supported by the Mid-Atlantic Transportation Sustainability Center—Region 3 University Transportation Center and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT).

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looking ahead

This year, CCRS and CHS formed a Medicaid Research Coordinating Committee comprised of researchers Subjects protocols, and reviewing proposals prior to submission for the State’s approval.

Our interdisciplinary team has the skills, expertise, and experience to develop and lead cutting-edge research. Over time we hope to expand the scope of our work and invite others with an interest in health services research—specifically related to the Medicaid population—to contact Mary Joan McDuffie, Director of the Medicaid Research Program in CCRS, to explore potential collaborations.

We expect this new agreement will allow us to partner more closely with the State and enhance the efficiency and the efficacy of their work with Medicaid. We also hope that the partnership will further the capabilities of the University to perform important research that can contribute to improvements in access to high-quality healthcare, reduce healthcare spending, and ultimately have a positive impact on the health of Medicaid recipients.

with the College of Health Sciences, and Dr. Jae Chul Lee at the University’s Center for Disabilities Studies to study health issues affecting vulnerable populations.

Funding for these projects has come from the ACCEL Big Data Grant, the Delaware General Assembly, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities and the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. CCRS has just begun a five-year project with the University of Maryland that will evaluate the implementation of Gov. Markell’s recently launched Delaware Contraception Access Now initiative.

Doctoral students have also used the Medicaid data for dissertation work. Kathryn Gifford, who has been a graduate research assistant in CCRS, recently defended her dissertation based upon the analysis of Medicaid claims data.

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