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Socioeconomic differences in treatment intensity in GP practice

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Objetivos (Objectives):

The general practitioner (GP) plays a key role in the delivery of health care services. However, due to lack of data, relative few studies explore how tasks performed by the GP during a consultation relate to the patients socioeconomic status. Inequality in health delivery is important due to the potential impact on the health discrepancies observed. In this paper, a discrete choice approach is used to examine the influence of patients' socioeconomic status on the choice of health care services in the Norwegian primary health care sector.

Metodologia (Methodology):

Data were constructed by linkage of administrative sickness benefit claims data, containing information on socioeconomic status, to physician reimbursement claims data for the years 2001-03. The sample contains patients on long-term sickness leave. The analysis focuses on differences by education as a measure of socioeconomic status. Estimating a two-level nested logit model.

Resultados (Results):

We find that patients' educational level increases the probability for prolonged consultations, while the impact on the probability of having laboratory tests is less clear. These differences remain after controlling for various demographic variables, patient health information, GP and municipality characteristics.

Conclusões (Conclusions):

The results show that socioeconomic status plays a role in the deliverance of health care services in primary care.