

Researchers find Mass. health care reform improved access to inpatient procedures among minorities

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Researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Boston University School of Medicine have found that health care reform in Massachusetts has improved minority access for some inpatient procedures. These findings are being presented today at the annual Society of General Internal Medicine annual meetings in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Since Massachusetts became the first state in 2006 to enact [health care reform](#), sharply expanding [health coverage](#) to all its citizens, no studies have examine whether expanded insurance coverage has improved access to specific elective inpatient procedures among minorities.

Using information from 2004-2008, the BUSM researchers analyzed Massachusetts hospital inpatient discharge data on 2,656,554 white patients, 195,481 black patients, and 172,852 [Hispanic patients](#), looking specifically at a number of cardiovascular, cancer and musculoskeletal procedures that are most often scheduled by physicians and therefore likely to be sensitive to insurance status. These procedures are also traditionally underutilized among minorities.

The researchers found that use of some surgeries among minorities increased significantly following the introduction of reform in 2006. Higher rates of increase for minorities were found when compared with similar rates for whites, and when compared with their trend prior to

reform. Between 2007 and 2008, use of some musculoskeletal procedures went up by 17 percent for blacks, nine percent for Hispanics and five percent for whites; these rates increased over similar rates in the pre-reform period for blacks and Hispanics, but not for whites. Use of some cardiovascular surgeries also grew faster among blacks and Hispanics.

"We have shown that health care reform has positively impacted minority patients in Massachusetts, specifically increasing access to important surgeries which are typically underutilized by this population," said study presenter Amresh Hanchate, PhD, a VA Research Health Scientist and a research assistant professor of general internal medicine at BUSM. "These findings may help further our understanding on how national [health care](#) reform could affect access throughout the country," she added.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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