

# Mexico's expanded health insurance improves hypertension treatment

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Mexico's new health insurance program, Seguro Popular, which was created to extend health insurance to the nation's 50 million uninsured by 2010, is having a positive effect on coverage of antihypertensive treatment in that country, according to a study published in the October 27 issue of *British Medical Journal*.

Results of the study show that adults insured through Seguro Popular are significantly more likely to receive treatment for hypertension and significantly more likely to have their blood pressure controlled than those without health insurance.

"Lack of health insurance has been consistently identified as a key obstacle to hypertension treatment and Mexico is among the last of the OECD countries to guarantee health insurance for all of its citizens," said Sara N. Bleich, PhD, lead author of the study and assistant professor in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of Health Policy and Management. Bleich conducted the research while completing her doctoral degree at Harvard University. "The odds of receiving antihypertensive treatment were 50 percent higher for those insured through Seguro Popular than those without insurance."

The study also showed that those insured through the program had a 35-percent-higher odds of receiving treatment with blood pressure control compared to the uninsured. In addition, the impact of Seguro Popular was greatest in regions of Mexico where there were higher concentrations of health care providers.

According to Bleich, hypertension affects more than 9 million adults in Mexico. It is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke, which are among the leading causes of death in Mexico. Treatment of the disease will cost Mexico an estimated \$3 billion this year.

For the study, the researchers examined national health data from 1,065 uninsured adults and compared them to an equal number of adults covered through Seguro Popular. The participants were selected from a group of 4,032 adults with hypertension.

"Compared with the uninsured, those insured with Seguro Popular had higher rates of coverage for antihypertensive treatment and blood pressure control. The success of Seguro Popular should serve as an example to other developing countries looking to provide health insurance to its citizens," said Bleich.

Source: Johns Hopkins University

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