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Secondary Data Analysis of Informal Caregiving in a Medicare Population

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Study Purpose:
The purpose of the study is to describe the status of informal caregiving within a subset of the Medicare population that is receiving some of its health care in the home and patient outcomes associated with informal caregiving. Rural settings and medication issues will be a particular focus.

Study Objectives
Objective 1. Describe the frequency and type of informal caregiving arrangements in the population by location, age group, and diagnosis.

Objective 2. Identify and compare risk factors, diagnoses, treatments and activities of daily living (ADLs) that impact outcomes in patients receiving informal home health care versus those who receive care from formal (trained) caregivers.

Objective 3. Identify future research studies of informal caregiving arrangements and patient outcomes in rural areas and by medication use behaviors on outcomes.

Results:
Objective 1: To date, most of the work that has been done has been to clean and organize the data to make identification of rural versus urban subjects easily classified when the analyses are run. Once this is completed, the descriptive analyses will be done in STATA.

Objective 2: This will occur after objective 1 is finally completed.

Objective 3. The PI has made some initial inquiries with potential collaborators on projects but we are waiting to see what the data reveal.

This project is still in progress due to delays. The process of obtaining some the data sets was delayed due to a need to meet the strict standards CMS has for its datasets. The last of the datasets arrived in Feb 2016 (two months after the Sabbatical assignment ended). At least one dataset contained errors and was replaced mid-September 2016. The datasets may be renewed for use on the same project for another year without additional cost, so the PI has been doing that. This means work can continue on the original project until it is finished without additional costs for the data. Time to work on this research will increase in Spring semester when the PI has a lighter teaching load.

Presentations of Progress to Date:
The PI was able to present some of the initial work in finding a definition of rural that can be used to categorize the subjects and that was presented at the 2016 Skaggs Symposium.

Citation: Carter J. Initial Findings from a Study on Informal Caregiving in Rural Areas. 2016 L.S. Skaggs Biomedical Research Symposium: Pocatello, ID. August 5, 2016. (Podium Presentation)