

## **Millions of U.S. Residents With Chronic Diseases Do Not Receive Adequate Treatment Because They are Uninsured, Study Finds\***

Millions of U.S. residents who have chronic conditions are not receiving appropriate care because they are uninsured, according to a recent article in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

For the study, lead author Andrew Wilper of the University of Washington-Seattle and colleagues analyzed health surveys of adults ages 18 to 64 conducted by the federal government. The researchers found that about 11 million people out of the 36 million people who reported having no health insurance in 2004 had been diagnosed with a chronic condition. For the 8.5 million U.S. residents with diagnosed diabetes, 1.4 million (16.6%) were uninsured in 2004. The study also found that less than 25% of the uninsured with a chronic condition reported seeing a physician within the previous year and that about 7% said they would visit the emergency department if they needed care. The study's authors said, "For some of the 11.4 million uninsured Americans with serious chronic conditions, access to care seems to be unobtainable; many may face early disability and death as a result."

However, researchers noted the estimate is likely to be low because it does not factor in uninsured U.S. residents who have a chronic condition with which they have not yet been diagnosed. Evidence supporting this interpretation is provided by an article in this month's journal *Diabetes Care* which reports that being uninsured was significantly associated with undiagnosed diabetes.

An editorial accompanying the Wilper article notes that while health care insurance reform is necessary for good care for chronic disease, it will not be sufficient unless it is coupled with quality improvement efforts targeting the reasons that vulnerable populations with access to care often do not receive optimal care. The author of the editorial outlines what every practice, every hospital, and every health plan can do now to improve outcomes for vulnerable patients with chronic disease and identify opportunities for policy reforms.

\*Adapted and expanded from: [http://www.kaisernetwork.org/Daily\\_Reports/rep\\_index.cfm?DR\\_ID=53726](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/Daily_Reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=53726)

### References

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