UC San Diego
Family Medicine Research Symposium 2025

Title
Demographic Changes of Free Clinic Patients After Medi-Cal Older Adult Eligibility Expansion

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Publication Date
2026-10-13

Peer reviewed

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QI Topic

To identify whether there was a difference in patient demographics between existing and new patients enrolled at a free clinic in San Diego after the May 2022 Older Adult Medi-Cal expansion, which expanded eligibility to undocumented immigrants aged 50 years or older.

Methods

Retrospective database analysis was conducted of all active patients in a student-run free clinic in San Diego as of 4/30/22 and newly enrolled patients between 5/1/22, the date of Medi-Cal expansion, and 7/31/23. All data was exported from Epic to a secure internal server for analysis. In this comparative cross-sectional study, existing patients acted as the control group. All variables were self-reported by patients at the time of enrollment at the clinic. Age (as of 4/20/22 for existing patients and 5/1/22 for new patients), sex, primary language, ethnic group, and marital status were compared. Age was analyzed using a two-tailed t-test, and the remaining variables were analyzed using chi-squared tests of independence. Analysis was conducted via Excel.

Results

Between 5/1/22 and 7/31/23, 52 new patients enrolled compared to the 415 pre-existing patients. New patients were significantly younger than existing patients, with an average age of 42.51 years and 56.92 years, respectively ($p<0.001$). There were significant changes after the expansion in primary language ($\chi^2(4) = 31.95$, $p < .001$), sex ($\chi^2(1) = 10.68$, $p = .001$), and ethnic group ($\chi^2(2) = 11.25$, $p = .004$). New patients were more likely than existing patients to list English as their primary language (30.8% vs. 19.3%, respectively), but were still predominantly Spanish-speaking. New patients were less likely than existing patients to be female (50% vs. 73%), and less likely to be Hispanic/Latino (57.7% vs. 76.4%). Notably, new patients were also less likely to report their ethnic group. There was no significant difference in marital status ($\chi^2(6) = 9.49$, $p = .148$).

Significance

Patients enrolled at the free clinic after the May 2022 Medi-Cal expansion were significantly younger, more likely to speak English, less likely to be female, and less likely to be Hispanic/Latino compared to pre-existing patients. Per the Migration Policy Institute, an estimated 169,000 undocumented immigrants live in San Diego County, the majority of whom were born in Mexico/Central America (74%) or speak Spanish as their primary language (73%). Before May 2022, the patient demographics at the free clinic reflected the many undocumented immigrants we served. The significant change in the patient demographics after the Medi-Cal expansion suggests this policy change provided accessible coverage to undocumented individuals 50 and older, allowing them to pursue public insurance options. The free clinic continues to fill a gap in healthcare accessibility. We recommend conducting a needs assessment to better understand our younger, multilingual population to adapt resources and meet their new needs, which

may include family planning and expanded pre-menopausal gynecologic care. Additionally, we will look to diversify our interpreter services.