Discrimination in access to medical care: a field experiment

Sylvain CHAREYRON *, and Yannick L’HORTY* and Pascale PETIT †

Abstract:

This study measures the differences in patients’ access to care for three medical specialties (dentists, gynecologists and psychiatrists) and according to two criteria: the patient’s origin, indicated by the consonance of his first and last names and a situation of social precariousness, corresponding to the fact of benefiting from health care coverage designated to low income individuals. It is based on a nationally representative telephone test with more than 1,500 medical offices covered and 4,500 appointment requests. It concludes that there is strong discrimination based on social precariousness in the three medical specialties tested. The situations of discriminatory care refusal, explicit and direct, are the fault of 9% of dentists, 11% of gynecologists and 15% of psychiatrists. The study does not show the presence of a substantial discrimination toward the patient of African origin neither toward the patient of African origin of Muslim religion.

Keywords: discrimination, access to care, care refusal, correspondence test

Codes JEL: J14, J18, R31

* Sylvain CHAREYRON, Université Paris-Est Créteil, ERUDITE (EA 437), TEPP (FR 2042), F-94000, Créteil, sylvain.chareyron@univ-paris-est.fr

† Yannick L’HORTY, Université Gustave Eiffel, ERUDITE (EA 437), TEPP-CNRS (FR 2042), F-77454 Marne-La-Vallée, France, yannick.lhorty@u-pem.fr

‡ Pascale Petit, Université Gustave Eiffel, ERUDITE (EA 437), TEPP-CNRS (FR 2042), F-77454 Marne-La-Vallée, France, pascale.petit@u-pem.fr

We have benefitted from the support of the Défenseur des Droits and Fonds CMU-C as part of a study agreement entitled "Travail de Recherche Innovant pour Contribuer à l’Evaluation du Refus d’Accès aux soins par un Testing sur l’Origine et la Précarité Sociale” (TRICERATOPS project).