

Is full coverage enough? Undocumented migrants' access to primary care: results from a randomized field experiment Work in progress.

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Abstract

Using a randomized field experiment, we show that health care practitioners discriminate against undocumented migrants, even when the cost of care is covered by the *Aide Médicale d'Etat* (State Medical Assistance or SMA). This result holds for the three tested medical specialties, across all French regions. Discrimination is more frequent among ophthalmologists than pediatricians or general practitioners (GPs), and among male than female doctors. The patient's gender, however, does not appear to have any effect. Following a standardized protocol, three fictitious patients (either all male or all female) called more than 3 000 private practitioners to schedule appointments with GPs, paediatricians and ophthalmologists: one undocumented migrant with SMA from a French-speaking African country, one low-income patient with complementary coverage called CSH (Complementary Solidarity Healthcare) bearing a French name, and one "reference patient" with a French name and no means-tested coverage. SMA patients were 11 percentage points less likely to obtain an appointment than reference patients, while the difference between CSH and reference patients was not significant. Our findings show that discrimination exists even though the cost of care is covered. They highlight the importance of non monetary costs such as administrative costs, and the value of time for medical practitioners.