

Abstract

Name: Stephen Thielke, MD

Title: The Effects of Pain on Health and Quality of Life in Older Adults

Chronic pain is common in older adults, and causes significant suffering and disability. Recent research has suggested that common painful conditions are associated with greater declines in physical health than are other chronic medical diagnoses such as diabetes or congestive heart failure. There is also evidence that painful diagnoses are associated with higher healthcare costs. I aim to investigate the effects of pain on health outcomes, quality of life, and health care utilization and costs using four large existing longitudinal datasets: the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Arkansas Medicaid, HealthCore, and the Medicare Health Support Program. Each of these captures a different sociodemographic group, and provides a slightly different set of measures of pain and outcomes. Using these datasets, I will categorize patients according to pain diagnoses and use of analgesic medications. I will then conduct analyses to determine how pain-related diagnoses are associated with (1) health outcomes, (2) quality of life, (3) mental health, and (4) costs and use of medical services. I will stratify the analyses by age and sociodemographic variables in order to model the effects of pain during aging and across different populations. I will include mental health diagnoses in the models in order to understand the relationship between pain and psychiatric comorbidity. Using these results, I will identify populations showing the most significant pain-related adverse health outcomes and identify opportunities for improving care for older adults with pain.