

Discussion

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliation

## 5-1 Discussion

I have selected the evaluation of the Medicaid Expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as a significant healthcare policy to review. Medicaid Expansion was implemented to increase healthcare access for low-income individuals by broadening Medicaid eligibility to include adults with incomes up to 138% of the federal poverty level (Goldman & Sommers, 2020). The policy has been a critical tool in reducing the number of uninsured Americans and improving access to necessary healthcare services.

The effectiveness of Medicaid Expansion has been measured through various criteria, including changes in health insurance coverage rates, healthcare access, utilization of healthcare services, and health outcomes. Studies have shown that states that expanded Medicaid saw greater reductions in uninsured rates compared to non-expansion states (Toyoda et al., 2020). Additionally, these states reported improved access to primary care, more regular checkups, and increased prescription medication use, factors that are critical in managing chronic diseases and improving overall health.

Social determinants of health, such as income, employment, and educational opportunities, play a significant role in this evaluation. Medicaid Expansion directly addresses the income barrier by providing health coverage to lower-income individuals, which can lead to better health outcomes and reduced health disparities. For instance, access to healthcare allows individuals to receive preventive services and early treatment, which can reduce the severity of diseases and the need for emergency healthcare services.

However, the impact of social determinants extends beyond just access to healthcare. For example, individuals in lower-income brackets might still face challenges such as transportation to healthcare facilities, the ability to take time off work for medical visits, or even understanding and navigating the healthcare system. These factors must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of Medicaid Expansion and similar policies.

Involvement in policy evaluation like this allows nurses to utilize their firsthand experience with patient care to advocate for effective programs and policies that address not only the medical but also the social needs of patients. By engaging in policy evaluation, nurses can help ensure that health policies are not only effectively implemented but are also successful in achieving their intended health outcomes.

## References

- Goldman, A. L., & Sommers, B. D. (2020). Among Low-Income Adults Enrolled In Medicaid, Churning Decreased After The Affordable Care Act: This study examines whether the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid eligibility had an impact on coverage disruptions – known as “churning” – among Medicaid enrollees. *Health Affairs*, 39(1), 85–93. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00378>
- Toyoda, Y., Oh, E. J., Premaratne, I. D., Chiuzan, C., & Rohde, C. H. (2020). Affordable Care Act state-specific Medicaid expansion: Impact on health insurance coverage and breast cancer screening rate. *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, 230(5), 775–783.

## Responses

Hello Rosemary,

You raise a crucial point about the challenges nurses face when stepping into policy evaluation roles due to perceived gaps in their training. One effective way to address this challenge is through targeted educational programs that focus specifically on health policy and evaluation. Nursing schools and professional organizations could offer workshops, seminars, or continuing education courses that provide nurses with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively participate in policy evaluation. Additionally, health institutions can establish partnerships with policy experts or academic institutions to facilitate mentorship programs where experienced policy analysts mentor nurses. This hands-on experience could significantly boost nurses' confidence and competence in engaging with policy evaluation and advocacy.

Hi Gerry,

Time constraints are indeed a significant barrier for nurses wishing to engage more deeply in policy evaluation. To mitigate this, healthcare organizations could consider recognizing policy engagement as part of job responsibilities, potentially offering dedicated time or even incentives for these activities. For instance, creating roles or committees within the organization focused on policy could allow interested nurses to participate during work hours without sacrificing patient care duties. Furthermore, advocating for policy work to be recognized as part of professional development could encourage more nurses to participate, knowing that their contributions to policy are valued and supported at institutional levels. Such structural changes could help integrate policy evaluation more seamlessly into the nursing role, ensuring that nurses have a more substantial impact on shaping healthcare policies.