



## **Medicaid expansion making diabetes meds more accessible to poor, study shows**

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Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act has benefited low-income diabetics, according to pharmaceutical and health economists at the University of Southern California. The researchers report that prescriptions for diabetes drugs increased about 40% in the 30 states that widened Medicaid eligibility in 2014–15, compared with previous years, while prescriptions were not meaningfully changed in the states that declined to increase Medicaid access. In addition, more prescriptions were filled in expansion states for newer and more effective—but also more expensive—drugs that have fewer adverse effects. The study, published in *Health Affairs* reinforces the notion for some that Medicaid expansion can help patients manage chronic disease and better able to afford treatment. "Gaining Medicaid insurance would have significantly reduced out-of-pocket spending for insulin for previously uninsured patients, thereby facilitating uptake of the medication," according to the report. Critics, however, warn that there eventually could be financial fallout for some patients based on the dynamics between insurers and the pharmaceutical industry. "You have to look at not just the immediate effects of a policy, but all of the effects of a policy," argues Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute. "As prices rise, fewer people will be able to afford diabetic medications."