

Is there Evidence for Ethnic Discrimination in the German Market for Health Care?

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Abstract:

We carry out an email-correspondence study to examine the prevalence of discrimination in access to outpatient health services in Germany. We approach 3,224 physician offices from the 79 largest cities in Germany to request an appointment. The experiment induces exogenous variation in the insurance status and the perception of German vs. Turkish ethnicity via the name of senders. We find that privately insured senders are 30 percent more likely to be offered an appointment than statutory health insurance holders are. Privately insured senders are also more likely to receive a response, have to wait less for an appointment, and are fewer times told to expect a long wait in the physician's office. By contrast, we estimate a precise zero effect of perceived ethnicity on observed outcomes. Our results suggest that physician offices benefit from prioritization of patients based on the type of insurance. It would cost them, however, to treat patients differently because of their ethnicity.