

Factors Influencing the use of Preventive Medical Care in Malaysia: Evidence from National Health and Morbidity Survey Data*

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Received 6 September 2014; accepted 19 March 2017

An increase in the prevalence of modifiable health risk factors, such as diabetes, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia, has become a serious public health issue in developed and developing countries. It is the main contributing factor to the rise in non-communicable diseases (NCD). The use of preventive medical care remains the best method to prevent NCD. The objective of the present study is to examine the factors affecting the decisions of people to use preventive medical care (e.g. blood glucose tests, blood cholesterol tests and blood pressure test). An ordered logit model is estimated based on a nationally representative sample. The present study finds that income, age, education, ethnicity, employment status, health insurance and smoking are significantly associated with the use of preventive medical care. As a measure towards increasing the prevalence of the preventive medical care usage, the government should pay special attention to low income earners, the young and the elderly, the less-educated, the ethnic minorities, employed individuals, individuals whose medical expenses are not paid by insurance carriers, as well as smokers.

Keywords: age, education, income, insurance, preventive medical care, screening.

JEL classification codes: D01, I12, I18.

doi: 10.1111/asej.12115

I. Introduction

Non-communicable diseases (NCD), such as heart and pulmonary system diseases, have become a serious public health concern in Malaysia (World Health Organization, 2011). In 2010, approximately 16.05 percent of the total deaths in government hospitals were associated with heart diseases. Moreover, the latest data revealed that adults who had NCD were 19.6 percent more likely to die prematurely than their counterparts who did not have NCD. In terms of disease burden, Ischemic

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