Obamacare Linked With Earlier Cancer Detection in Young Women

Gynecologic cancers among this population were diagnosed and treated sooner after the Affordable Care Act went into effect.

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Cervical, endometrial and ovarian cancers are just a few of the gynecologic cancers that affect thousands of young American women annually. Now, new findings published in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology reveal that young women with these kinds of cancers were diagnosed and treated sooner under the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare), reports Reuters.

For the study, scientists analyzed data from a national cancer database. Their analysis included women between ages 21 and 35 who were diagnosed with uterine, cervical, ovarian, vulvar or vaginal cancer before the ACA went into effect (2004 to 2009) and after the ACA became law (2011 to 2014).

A total of 1,912 gynecologic cases were identified prior to the ACA and 2,059 after the implementation of the ACA among women diagnosed between ages 21 and 26. For women diagnosed between ages 27 and 35, there were 9,782 cases before the ACA became law and 10,456 after.

Only one in three women ages 19 to 26 had health insurance prior to the ACA, researchers noted. But today, more than four in five women in this age group are insured.

“We know that diagnosing and treating women in the earlier stage of disease helps them live longer and healthier, which is particularly important for young women,” said Anna Smith, MD, MPH, and Amanda Fader, MD, the study’s authors and gynecologists at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore. “However, prior to the ACA, young people were more likely to be uninsured than any other group of Americans.”

Findings also showed that women in both age groups were more likely to receive fertility-sparing cancer treatments during the ACA years.

According to Laura Havrilesky, a gynecologist at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, “This study adds to the evidence of the positive effects of improved coverage through the ACA on young women’s health care costs and choices.”

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