

Inequality and Access to Healthcare as a Result of the Internet

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Abstract

The ability to access information and resources via the Internet is a vital component of modern living. This report examines the impact of Internet access on health inequality across various socioeconomic categories using data from a cross-country panel study and the WHO Health Equity Assessment Toolkit (HEAT). The findings show that having access to the Internet greatly raises the standard of health and reduces health disparities. This research also explores the social and economic factors of access to healthcare using cross-country data from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) database. In particular, it is discovered that having access to the Internet considerably eases getting medical treatment and lessens the detrimental effects of income inequality on getting it. When taken as a whole, these results highlight the value of the Internet in lowering health disparities and expanding access to healthcare.

Introduction

Both theoretically and practically, lowering health disparities and enhancing access to healthcare are crucial for the area of public health. On the one hand, health inequality, which is a general term for systematic disparities in the distribution of health resources or in the health condition among various population groups, has a significant negative social and economic impact on people and societies. On the other hand, improving the doctor-patient relationship, addressing health literacy, and finding cost-effective resources are crucial ways to promote access to healthcare, which can result in considerable improvements to public health. The fact that healthcare has been undergoing a significant digital transformation as a result of the broad use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Particularly, the widespread adoption of the Internet has improved access to health services and information, producing effects on health outcomes that are both distributional and aggregate. For instance, one of the most cutting-edge health services in the digital era is Web-Based Medical Care (WBMS), which is widely defined as a cooperative interaction between Internet technology and medical service. The use of WBMS, such as telehealth, eHealth, and mHealth, has significantly aided in the dissemination of health-related knowledge and resources across various social groups via the Internet. As a result, the growing use of the Internet has given individuals all around the world, especially those in need, the ability to receive healthcare locally or remotely. Healthcare professionals have been using the Internet to

advance their knowledge and abilities and, more crucially, to aid and direct patients as needed. The distributional and overall effects of Internet use on health outcomes have only been systematically studied in a few number of research, despite the significant role that Internet access plays in public health.

This paper conducts a cross-country analysis to examine the effects of the Internet on health disparity and healthcare access in order to fill this important gap in the literature. First, this study measures how Internet access affects health disparities between different income groups. It has been discovered that greater Internet accessibility dramatically lowers health disparities and enhances general health if the Internet were more widely available, the disparity in health between the wealthy and the poor would be narrowed. When we account for a wide range of factors that can have an impact on health inequality in the estimation, the pattern continues to be present. The second part of this essay looks at the social and economic factors that influence access to healthcare. We specifically concentrate on the effects of Internet access, income inequality, and their interaction among all the variables in the estimation. It has been demonstrated that an increase in income disparity hinders access to healthcare while an increase in Internet access facilitates it. This paper makes three important contributions. This research first clarifies the connection between the Internet and significant health effects. We demonstrate how Internet access has a significant impact on health disparities and access to healthcare. Our research indicates that boosting Internet usage and lowering obstacles to health information access can be worthwhile public health initiatives. Second, by examining how Internet usage influences the connection between wealth inequality and healthcare access, this article offers a distinctive contribution. Our findings imply that having access to the Internet reduces the detrimental effects of wealth inequality on healthcare access, which highlights the significant influence of the Internet on health outcomes. Thirdly, based on representative data, this work contributes to a better understanding of the variables influencing health disparities and healthcare access. This study employs cross-country panel data that spans more than two decades and a wide number of rich and developing nations to undertake an empirical analysis. We are able to fully utilise the changes in the estimations across countries and over time thanks to the extensive and detailed data. It gives researchers the means to apply new technology to overcome inequalities in public health and a beneficial tool for future research into persistent health disparities.

Conclusion

The manner that health information is exchanged and accessed has undergone a significant transformation thanks to the Internet and has changed to reflect the constantly evolving demands of both patients and doctors. People's knowledge of, interest in, and skill with regard to health decision-making techniques considerably rise as a result of access to health information online. In the modern day, the Internet is being used more frequently for health-related activities, which has significant implications for public health, including health inequality and healthcare access. Despite the relevance of this subject to the study of public health, few thorough investigations into their interactions have been made. By methodically analysing the effects of the Internet on health inequality and healthcare access based on a cross-country analysis, this work adds to the body of scholarship. The two main conclusions of this research are related. First, having access to the Internet improves overall health and greatly lowers health disparities between socioeconomic groups. Additionally, having access to the Internet considerably lessens the detrimental effects of income inequality on healthcare access. More importantly, the results hold up under numerous robustness tests.

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