The relationship between access to health insurance and Obesity

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Obesity is a global epidemic that is spreading at a faster rate in developed and developing countries. This paper investigates the relationship between access to health insurance and obesity after controlling for physical inactivity, poverty, sleep and binge drinking. The main hypothesis is that a higher access to health care will decrease the probability of obesity in the U.S. I examined data on unhealthy lifestyles and access to health insurance in 2016 collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the CDC Foundation as a part of the 500 Cities project. This project estimates for 27 measures of chronic disease related to unhealthy behaviors. These cities’ socioeconomic information such as income and poverty were obtained from the Census Bureau. Using ordinary least square regression analysis, this study finds that an increase in the access to health insurance is related to a decrease in the likelihood of being obese (correlation coefficients = -.182353; p-value < 0.01). The results have implications that a higher access to health insurance can be used ameliorate the obesity epidemic considering the relationship between access to health insurance and obesity.