

# Schroeder Center for Health Policy at the College of William & Mary

November 2017

## Schroeder Center Receives Nearly \$1 Million to Examine the Interrelationship between Medicare and Medicaid

Together with Tufts University and the University of Pittsburgh, William & Mary's Schroeder Center for Health Policy was recently awarded a grant to study the interrelationships between the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The grant, nearly \$1 million in size, was awarded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the lead federal agency charged with U.S. healthcare system quality and safety, and will fund research activities from 2017 through 2021.

The grant will fund research related to low-income persons aged 65 and older who are eligible to receive healthcare through both Medicare and Medicaid. For this group, Medicare serves as the primary payer of their healthcare, while Medicaid is intended to cover cost-sharing and services that Medicare does not. Overall, both programs insure more than 100 million people and cost more than \$1 trillion a year.

The research will be carried out by a team of health economists at Tufts, Pitt, and William & Mary including Melissa McInerney (Tufts), Lindsay Sabik (Pitt) and Jennifer Mellor (W&M). The team will conduct extensive analyses of multiple large household survey datasets, as well as data derived from claims submitted to Medicare and Medicaid by healthcare providers, all spanning a 15-year period. "Our work will tackle some important questions about using public policies to improve health," Mellor said. "We know that Medicaid has valuable benefits for participants, but Medicaid participation by low-income seniors is thought to be low, and the factors that lead to Medicaid participation among low-income seniors have not been studied extensively," she added. The research will also study healthcare use by duals. As Tufts professor Melissa McInerney notes, "healthcare use by this group is important to study because seniors and adults with disabilities drive Medicaid spending growth." Additionally, the research will produce valuable state-level data for the research and policy communities.

The project comes at an important time given the current policy climate. The Medicaid program has been undergoing substantial changes that may have had unintended, indirect effects on Medicaid participation, health, and healthcare use by low-income seniors. At the same time, the aging of the baby boomer cohort is placing greater strains on the program. According to Pitt professor, Lindsay Sabik, "by looking at the ways that Medicaid policies intentionally and sometimes unintentionally affect low-income seniors, we will provide policymakers with information that will help ensure access to care and health for this vulnerable group."



## Student RAs Get Hands-On Experience with Data Analysis in Program and Policy Evaluation

One of the best ways for students to polish their research skills is by assisting a faculty member. In summer 2017, three W&M undergrads worked as research assistants to different faculty, all sponsored by the Schroeder Center for Health Policy. Each student got hands-on experience working with the types of data needed to evaluate programs and public policies.

For Meredith Passero, this meant digesting a large volume of survey data on SHIP, or the [School Health Initiative Program](#). Meredith, a dual major in Government and Economics who will graduate in Spring 2018, worked with the Schroeder Center's annual survey of elementary school teachers in the Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools. Each year's survey asks hundreds of local teachers about their experiences and observations related to student physical activity and nutrition. The analysis of the survey data helps to guide programming decisions by SHIP, such as how to direct scarce teacher supports to the grades and schools that need help the most. Meredith gained experience conducting statistical analysis with Stata software as she analyzed reams of survey data. She also learned how to make the statistical output accessible to a non-academic audience, and summarized her work in writing and in Powerpoint slide presentations for staff from SHIP and the [Williamsburg Health Foundation](#).

Similarly, Jake Leonard, a Psychology major who plans to graduate in Spring 2018, helped collect data that will be used for research and program evaluation. Jake assisted Psychology Professor [Danielle Dallaire](#) as part of the evaluation of a program that supports pregnant incarcerated women at a local jail facility. Beyond assisting with data collection and entry for the project, Jake also gathered and provided resources and materials to the women on how to prepare for a healthy pregnancy, and helped update program instructional materials.

Finally, Atticus Bolyard, a Mathematics major and part of the class of 2019, assisted Economics Professor [Peter Savelyev](#). Atticus learned state-of-the-art data analysis techniques as part of a project that seeks to establish the causal effect of education on health. Using data on a large sample of individuals who were part of the Minnesota Twins Registry, Atticus learned how to use sophisticated econometric techniques to separate correlation from causality. These techniques help determine whether more educated people live longer because they have some other trait correlated with both better health and more education, or because more education directly improves their longevity. Distinguishing between the two explanations is crucial for policymakers who need to know the benefits of public programs like government-funded schooling, but is a complex task for social science researchers, who seldom can conduct randomized controlled trials.

## Schroeder Center Welcomes John Snouffer



The Schroeder Center for Health Policy is pleased to welcome new Research Associate, John Snouffer. Snouffer earned his Master of Public Policy (M.P.P.) degree and his B.A. from William & Mary between 2015-2016. While at William & Mary, Snouffer was selected as a Trice Fellow, a distinction given to exceptionally qualified students, and he received the Outstanding Graduate Assistantship Award. In addition, Snouffer was competitively selected as one of the first fellows under the [Schroeder Center-Brock Institute \(SC-BI\) program](#), which requires students to complete projects involving extensive data analysis, writing, and presentation. Under the SC-BI program, Snouffer prepared

a [policy brief](#) on the impact of the Affordable Care Act's dependent coverage mandate on Virginia's young adults and their use of inpatient hospital care for all non-birth related admissions as well as mental illness and substance abuse admissions.

Prior to returning to William & Mary as a full-time hire, Snouffer worked at the [National Opinion Research Center](#) (NORC) at the University of Chicago in Bethesda, Maryland. His work included, among other things, participating in the research design, data collection, and quantitative analyses on projects for various clients including the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and NYC's Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ). He also co-authored a NORC research paper on rising inpatient drug prices, which was sponsored by the American Hospital Association.

Snouffer's responsibilities at the Schroeder Center include data analysis and research support to Center-affiliated faculty. His current research projects include examining Medicaid participation of Medicare beneficiaries and the effects of recent policy changes, made possible by an [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\) grant](#) (see above). He is also analyzing the extent to which opioid prescribing drives opioid hospitalizations.

The Schroeder Center provides timely policy information and rigorous, unbiased analysis of health and healthcare problems to policymakers, educators, and students. Snouffer's addition to the Schroeder Center staff increases the Center's ability to expand its research and fulfill its mission.