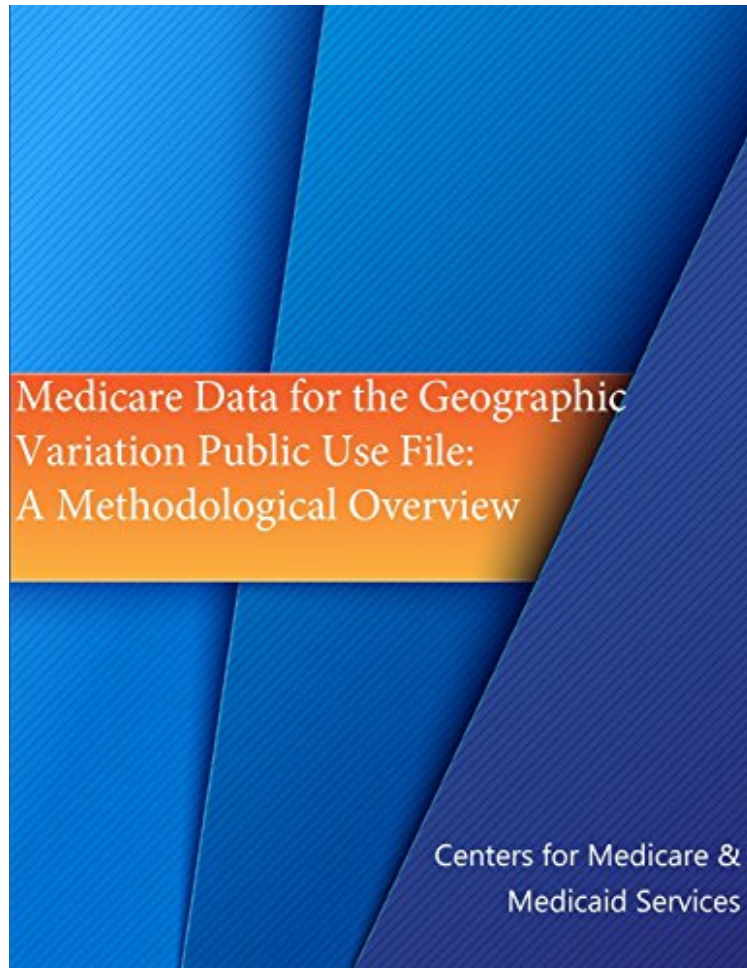


Medicare Data for the Geographic Variation Public Use File: A Methodological Overview

Centers for Medicare Medicaid
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Federal policymakers and health researchers have long recognized that the amount and quality of the health care services that Medicare beneficiaries receive vary substantially across different regions of the United States. Much of that variation does not appear to be caused by differences in beneficiaries'squo; health, and one widely-publicized estimate asserted that as much as 30 percent of Medicare expenditures may be unnecessary. The Office of Information

Products and Data Analytics within the Centers for Medicare Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a public use file, the Geographic Variation Public Use File (GV PUF), to support further analysis of this important issue. This public use file is based primarily on information from CMS's Chronic Conditions Data Warehouse (CCW), which contains 100 percent of Medicare claims for beneficiaries who are enrolled in the fee-for-service (FFS) program as well as enrollment and eligibility data. The GV PUF covers calendar years 2008-2012 and has information on the demographics, spending, service utilization, and prevalence of certain chronic conditions for Medicare beneficiaries in different parts of the country. We also incorporated a variety of quality indicators that can be used to analyze relationships between Medicare utilization and quality of care. The December 2013 update to the GV PUF adds data for 2012 and incorporates several minor revisions to the CMS methodology. This update supersedes the data that we provided in May 2013. This overview is divided into the following eight sections: 1. Key data sources 2. Study population 3. Geographic variables 4. Disease variables 5. Standardization and risk adjustment of spending 6. Utilization measures 7. Quality measures 8. Changes from the May 2013 dataset to the December 2013 update