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| Title of Research * | The Effect of Judicial Campaign Contributions on Medical Malpractice Awards |
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Introduction & Purpose *

Medical malpractice is a continuing, significant issue in health care. Hospital administrators attempt to reduce hospital liability, physicians calculate their liability for clinical decisions, and medical malpractice insurers determine premiums utilizing malpractice claim patterns. Previously, researchers focused on factors affecting malpractice premiums and settlement of claims but did not examine in great detail the factors influencing malpractice award amounts. During the previous decade, judicial elections have become increasingly politicized attracting more publicity and requiring increasing amounts of campaign money. Although researchers examined whether judges are influenced by campaign contributions, researchers focused on individual judges and not the macro effect from campaign contributions.

Experimental Design *

We created a unique database combining state supreme court campaign contributions from lawyers, health professionals, and health care institutions with the National Practitioner Databank's malpractice payments from 2004 to 2009. Utilizing a fixed effects, multivariate regression model with our panel data, we analyzed the effect of judicial campaign contributions on medical malpractice payments within states where contributions were made.

Results *

Our results demonstrate that contributions from health care professionals and institutions significantly affects medical malpractice payment amounts in contrast to contributions from lawyers, which do not significantly affect malpractice payment amounts. Further, health care contributions increase the payment amounts. We still notice the effect after accounting for the state population, the number of lawyers in the state, the state's poverty rate, and previous malpractice payment amounts. Further, we account for any delayed effect between campaign contributions and payment amounts by lagging the contributions for one and two years.

Conclusions *

Based on our results, health care professionals and institutions contributing money to judicial campaigns may be more willing to pay higher malpractice payment amounts. Our results are a preliminary exploration of these relationships and suggest further work on the exact mechanisms campaign contributions affect malpractice payment amounts.

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