

Seminar Series

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Who Pays for Obesity?
1:30 – 3:00 pm
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2-650 Moos Tower

Abstract

Is obesity a public health crisis or a widespread private crisis? The answer to this question depends on who pays for decisions made by individuals about diet and exercise. This matters because the optimal public policy response to the rise in obesity prevalence depends on the answer. The kinds of policies that might be justified in a public health crisis (bans or taxes on junk food, government subsidies for health behavior) are harder to justify in a private crisis. One important mechanism by which personal decisions about body weight might affect others is through pooled health insurance, since obese individuals spend more on health care (on average) than thinner individuals. In a health insurance pool, when one person's health expenditures rise, everyone else in the pool pays for it. The focus of my talk will be on an empirical examination of the extent to which health insurance makes body weight a communal decision.

Papers by Dr. Bhattacharya on this subject are available and electronic copies can be requested by emailing raasc001@umn.edu.

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This seminar is free and open to the public. For more information, call 612-624-6151.