

Evaluating the Impact of Community Health Centres on Risk Reduction in South Africa

A Methodological Difference-in-Differences Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: Community health centres are a cornerstone of primary healthcare in South Africa, yet robust quantitative evidence of their impact on population-level health risks is limited. Existing evaluations often lack rigorous counterfactual frameworks, making causal attribution challenging.

Purpose and objectives: This study aimed to quantify the causal effect of a national community health centre expansion programme on key health risk factors, specifically hypertension prevalence and smoking rates, using a quasi-experimental design.

Keywords: *Community health centres, Primary healthcare, South Africa, Risk reduction, Difference-in-differences*

Article Highlights

- Quantifies causal impact of health centre expansion using a quasi-experimental design.
- Finds significant reduction in hypertension, but no effect on smoking rates.
- Validates the parallel trends assumption with placebo tests in pre-intervention periods.
- Advocates for integrating behavioural change components with facility-based care.

Methodological Note

The study employs a difference-in-differences model with two-way fixed effects and cluster-robust standard errors, exploiting the phased rollout of centres for causal inference.

This analysis provides robust evidence for the specific, rather than general, health impacts of primary care expansion.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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