

Willingness to pay for drug abuse treatment: results from a contingent valuation study in Taiwan.

張文英

Tang CH;Liu JT;Chang CW;Chang WY

Abstract

Objective

In this study, we attempted to describe and justify the use of a contingent valuation (CV) method to elicit the willingness to pay (WTP) for a drug abuse treatment program by the general public in Taiwan.

Method

In total, 1817 CV survey questionnaires were conducted through telephone interviews from randomly dialed numbers. Subjects were members of the general public aged between 20 and 65 years, with full-time jobs, and residing in the three major Taiwanese cities of Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung. Respondents' WTP for drug treatment programs was elicited for two different financing mechanisms: payment through 'compulsory' payroll tax/health insurance premiums, and through 'voluntary' donations. The WTP was modeled as a function of scenarios and policies of the treatment program, respondents' socio-demographic information, and their responses to knowledge and attitudes questions.

Results

The general public in Taiwan was estimated to be willing to pay between NT\$81.00 and NT\$95.00 per month for a drug abuse treatment program, while the benefits of drug abuse treatment were estimated to range between NT\$12.8 billion and NT\$15.0 billion in 2004 (US\$1 = NT\$31.9 in 2004), which was equal to around 0.15% of Taiwan's GDP for that year. The general public in Taiwan was more willing to pay for drug abuse treatment via increases in NHI premiums than via donations. Preferences for the drug abuse treatment program were also found to be sensitive to the target treated population as well as the sequence in which the WTP questions were asked.

Conclusions

Results of this study provide policymakers with important evidence on the monetary value of a substance abuse treatment program, allocation of healthcare resources, and a possible financing mechanism of the treatment program, which may be

justified by knowledge of the WTP of the general public. This study has also advanced the knowledge of the methodological issues with regard to CV questionnaire design, and it provides a base case for further studies on drug abuse in Taiwan.

Keywords: Willingness to pay; Contingent valuation methods; Substance abuse; Economic evaluation; Health care financing; National Health Insurance; Taiwan