

# Jacob Berman

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Citizenship: USA

## Education

**University of California, Los Angeles**

*Ph.D. Economics*

*Expected, June 2021*

**University of Chicago**

*B.A. Economics with honors*

*June 2013*

## Research

**Can Income Buy Health? Evidence from Social Security Benefit Discontinuities and Medicare Claims** (*job market paper*)

Income is a powerful predictor of health among the elderly, but existing research has struggled to disentangle the direct causal effect of income on health. In this paper, I estimate the causal effect of Social Security income on health care utilization and health outcomes among elderly men. Using Medicare administrative records and a regression discontinuity design, I exploit several changes in the Social Security benefit formula that vary abruptly by date of birth – variation that has been overlooked by previous research. I find that increases in Social Security income reduces Medicare utilization across a variety of health care settings. I estimate a 1% increase in Social Security income leads to a 0.9% decline in payments for Medicare covered services. I also find declines in diagnoses for chronic conditions and mortality. My results highlight the importance of examining health outcomes when evaluating the costs and benefits of social insurance programs.

**The Effect of Dual Eligibility on Health Care Access and Health Outcomes** (*work in progress*)

The Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) program accounts for 34% of Medicare spending and includes among the least healthy, most expensive patients in the United States. QMB beneficiaries are exempt from Medicare cost-sharing and premiums, but QMB providers face administrative burdens and lower reimbursement rates. Given these offsetting features, the effectiveness of the program is unclear. This paper provides the first quasi-experimental evaluation of the QMB program by studying an expansion which tripled program enrollment in Connecticut in 2009. Using a synthetic control design and detailed Medicare administrative data, I estimate the causal effect of QMB enrollment on health care access and health outcomes.

**Measuring Fiscal Impetus: The Great Recession in Historical Context** (with Leslie McGranahan), *Economic Perspectives*, 2014

Although there are vast literatures evaluating particular fiscal interventions, policymakers lack indicators that describe the fiscal stance across all government sectors. In this paper, we create a comprehensive measure of fiscal policy called fiscal impetus. Our measure describes the combined effect of purchases, taxes, and transfers across all levels of government. We use this measure of fiscal impetus to examine how fiscal policy has behaved during business cycles in the past, how it

responded to the most recent recession, and how it is likely to evolve over the next several years. Our analysis reveals that policy was more expansionary than average during the 2007 recession and has been significantly more contractionary than average during the recovery. By the end of 2012, fiscal impetus was below its historical business cycle average and it is forecast to remain depressed well into the future.

**The Maturity Structure of Treasury Debt: How Costly is Mismanagement?** (*undergraduate thesis*)

## Employment

**Congressional Budget Office**

*Summer Research Associate*

*June 2017-September 2017*

**Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago**

*Associate Economist*

*June 2013-July 2015*

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**

*Federal Fiscal Policy Intern*

*June 2012-August 2012*

## Awards and Fellowships

Center for Retirement Research Dissertation Fellowship (*2020-2021*)

Lewis L. Clarke Graduate Fellowship (*2020*)

NBER Pre-Doctoral Fellowship on the Economics of an Aging Workforce (*2018-2020*)

Graduate Research Mentorship, UCLA (*2017-2018*)

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA (*Summer 2017*)

David Hu Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Thesis (*Spring 2013*)

## Teaching

TA – Public Finance, Adriana Lleras-Muney (*Fall 2016, Fall 2017, Fall 2019*)

Guest Lecturer – Public Finance, Adriana Lleras-Muney (*Fall 2019*)

TA – Intermediate Microeconomics I, Ed McDevitt (*Winter 2017*)

TA – Intermediate Microeconomics II, Troy Smith (*Spring 2017*)

## Invited Talks

2020: ASHEcon

2019: UC Davis Center for Poverty Research

## References

Adriana Lleras-Muney (*main advisor*)  
Professor  
Economics Department  
University of California, Los Angeles  
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Kathleen McGarry  
Professor  
Economics Department  
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Martin Hackmann  
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Laura Wherry  
Assistant Professor  
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