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CPH609 – Week 4 Assignment

Research question from manuscript:

What is the association between access to a large number of prescription NSAIDs and overall healthcare spending?

Discussion questions:

1. The researchers compared formularies but these might just be proxies for something else. They did address one of my concerns in the discussion re: the formulary being a proxy for the restrictiveness of the plan in general, but they did not address the potential differences in the populations on each of these plans. Presumably these plans are not administered, or chosen, completely at random so there are likely to be systematic differences in the populations represented by each plan which likely go beyond the simple demographic covariates they included in their models.
2. How accurate are the ICD-9 codes? My understanding is that these are billing codes and are often used for convenience, or business purposes that do not necessarily relate to the patient’s actual condition.
3. Why use a binary cut-off for restictiveness when this could be entered as a (somewhat) continuous measure? They did do a sensitivity analysis to evaluate different cut-offs but not to evaluate the potential of a continuous effect.