

WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH CHECKUP PROGRAM: ASSESSMENT BY THE TRAVEL COST METHOD

Kenji OHSHIGE^{1*}, Shunsaku MIZUSHIMA² and Osamu TOCHIKUBO¹

Objective Whether the benefit of a public health program surpasses the cost of providing the program is an important question for public service providers. This study aimed to evaluate one health checkup program provided by a municipal government by measuring the public's willingness to pay (WTP) for maintaining the program.

Methods A questionnaire-based study of a health checkup program targeting people joining the National Health Insurance system was conducted. The WTP was estimated from a demand curve for the program, which was constructed by a revealed preference method, that is, by the travel cost method.

Results The WTP was calculated as 5410 yen per person, an amount substantially below the cost to the government of providing the service. The aggregate WTP was also estimated to be lower than the current expense of the municipal government.

Conclusion The amount users are willing to pay for a health checkup program provided by the municipal government appears to be less than the actual cost of the program. The travel cost method might reflect short-term private benefit produced by the health checkup program but cannot take into account long-term private benefit or overall social benefits which ensues.

Key words : health checkup, benefit, willingness to pay, travel cost method

^{1*} Department of Public Health, Yokohama City University, Graduate School of Medicine, 3-9 Fukuura, Kanazawa-ku, Yokohama 236-0004, Japan
E-mail: kenoh@med.yokohama-cu.ac.jp

² International Research Center for Medical Education, University of Tokyo