The research reported herein was pursuant to a grant from the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) funded as part of the Disability Research Consortium (DRC), with additional support from the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The findings and conclusions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and do not represent the views of SSA, ASPE, or any agency of the federal government.
Problem

- Increasing numbers of individuals receiving DI
- Few receiving DI exit from the rolls
- Can we identify workers before they apply?
Research questions

- What are the demographic, employment, and program participation characteristics of people before they apply for DI?

- What are the demographic, employment, and program participation characteristics of people at risk of applying for DI?
Methods

  - Matched to SSA administrative data

- Identified individuals from SIPP who applied for DI up to six years after initial SIPP interview
  - Ages 25 to 55 as of the first interview
Applicants involved in labor force, even after application

N = 108 to 1,335
Program participation among applicants was common, but not consistent.

Program participation

N = 108 to 1,335
Varied rates of DI applications among at-risk groups

- Workers’ compensation
- Private disability insurance
- Unemployment insurance (UI)
- Workers at risk of UI
- Veterans with disabilities
- Individuals with job training
- Individuals with high health expenditures

N = 559 to 4,493
Varied rates of DI applications among at-risk groups

New beneficiaries
- Workers' compensation
- Private disability insurance
- Unemployment insurance (UI)

Persons with disabilities
- Workers at risk of UI
- Veterans with disabilities
- Individuals with job training
- Individuals with high health expenditures

■ Percentage who apply for DI ■ Percentage of all DI applicants

N = 559 to 4,493
Conclusions

- Potential opportunities for early intervention, but also complexity
  - Large portion of applicants had earnings just before application
  - Each at-risk group represents a small portion of the applicant pool

- SIPP data are exploratory and limited
  - Small samples, short windows of observation for some key at-risk groups
Policy implications for early intervention

- Likely DI applicants within a risk group could be identified, given the right data source

- Any targeting of specific risk group may have small impact on overall DI population

- Given the high workforce involvement, would employer-based programs offer more opportunities for early intervention?
- Examine characteristics that differentiate successful and unsuccessful applicants
- Consider employment patterns of successful applicants

DRC year 3 project
To Apply or Not to Apply: The Employment and Program Participation of Social Security Disability Insurance Applicants and Non-Applicants

- Allison Thompkins, Todd Honeycutt, Claire Gill, Joseph Mastrianni, and Michelle Bailey
- DRC Working Paper 2014-05
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