

The effect of the freedom of choice on the health systems responsiveness. The case of the Health Single Area in Community of Madrid

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INTRODUCTION

A new regional law was implemented in 2009 in Community of Madrid to extend the freedom of choice of General Practitioner (GP) and specialist doctor to the whole region. As from 2009, the 11 Health Areas was removed and one Health Single Area (HSA) was created. Therefore, citizens could freely choose among any GP, in primary care service, as well as among any specialist doctor of any hospital of the region, in the specialised care service. Several European countries are implementing this type of public policies (*Siciliani et al., 2017*)

The Community of Madrid was the first region in Spain which extended the freedom of choice to the whole region. According to the literature, a higher level of choice may affect the quality, the responsiveness or the waiting times in the healthcare services (*Fotaki et al., 2008; Miani et al., 2013; Ringard et al., 2011; Simões, Augusto, & Fronteira, 2017; Valentine et al., 2003*).

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to analyse the impact of the implementation of the HSA in the Community of Madrid on the responsiveness of the public services of primary and specialised care of the region.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

Dataset and sample

- Spanish Healthcare Barometer (SHB) survey 2002-2016.
- Pooled data. Sample: 109,601 observations
- Aggregated data: Spanish Statistical Office and MHSSE.

Methods

- Difference-in-differences method
- Synthetic control method

RESULTS

Primary care service

- The waiting times slightly increased by 0,5 days because of the reform in Community of Madrid (Figure 1).
- It seems not to have impact on the *Dignity* domain.
- Negative effects on the *Communication* and *Prompt attention* domains which are reduced in the long run (Fig. 2 and 3).

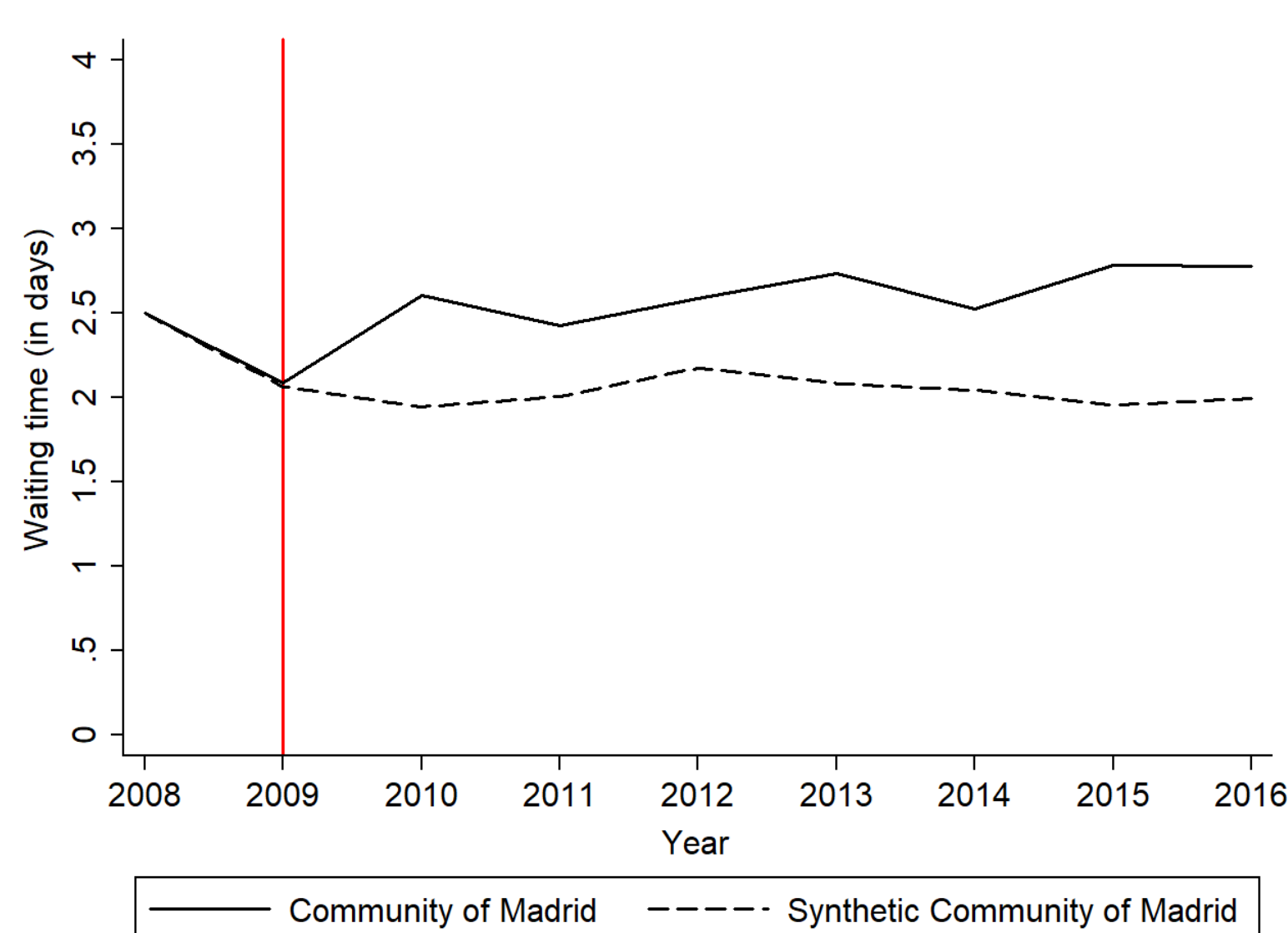


Figure 1

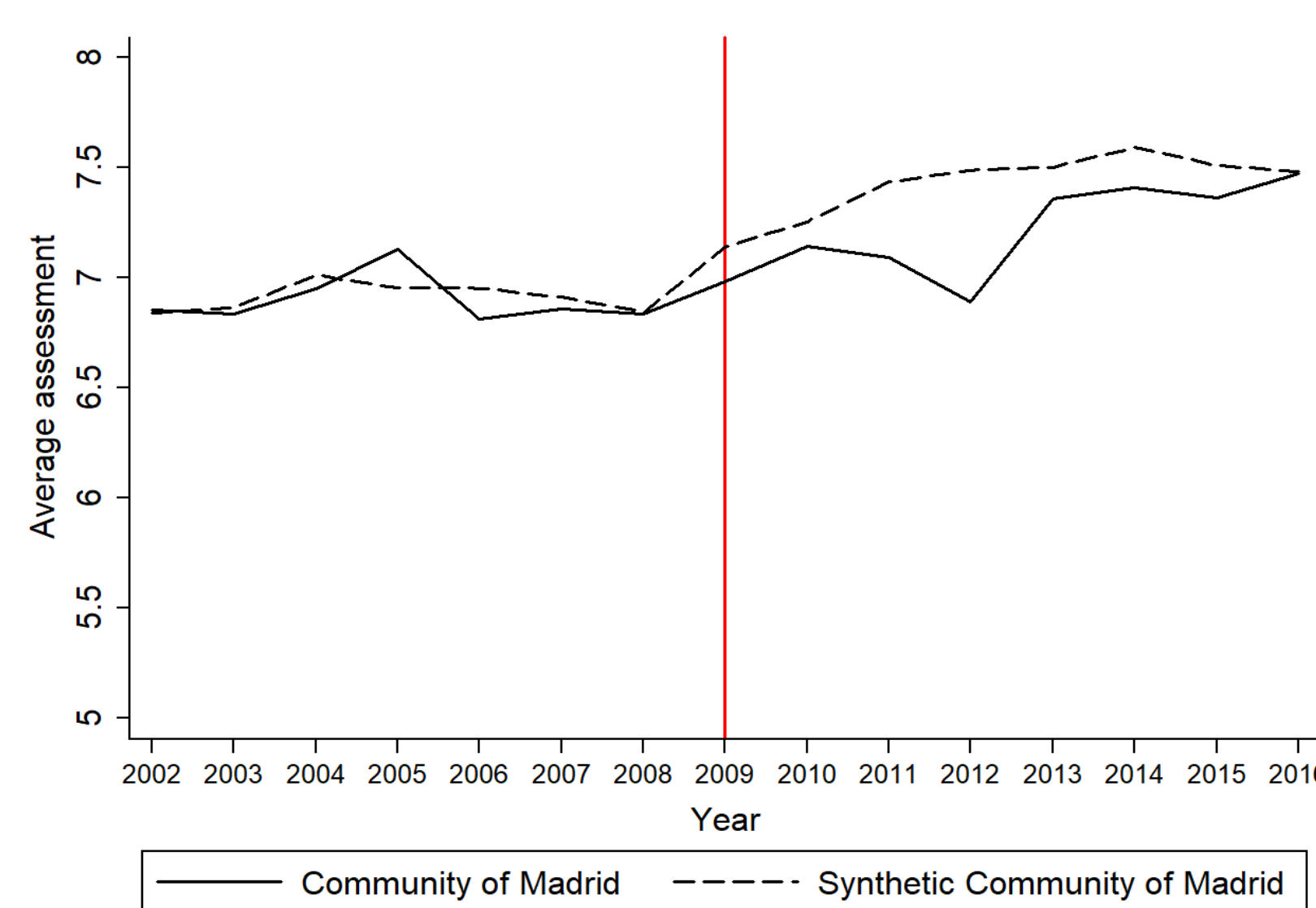


Figure 2

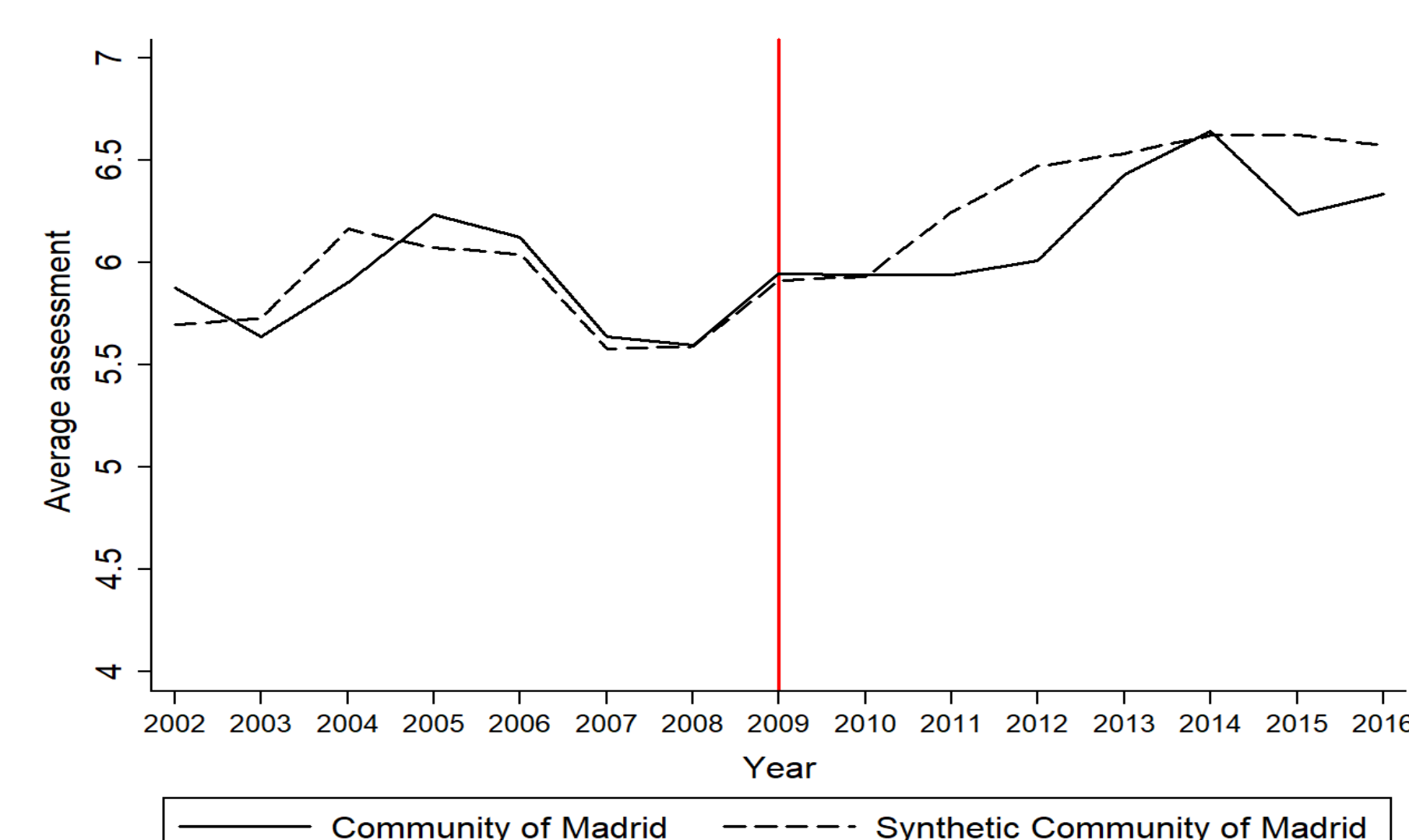


Figure 3

Specialised care service

- The waiting times slightly dropped by around 30 days because of the reform in Community of Madrid (Fig. 4).
- It seems not to have impact on the *Dignity* and *Prompt attention* domain.
- Negative effects on the *Communication* domain which become positive in the long run (Fig. 5).

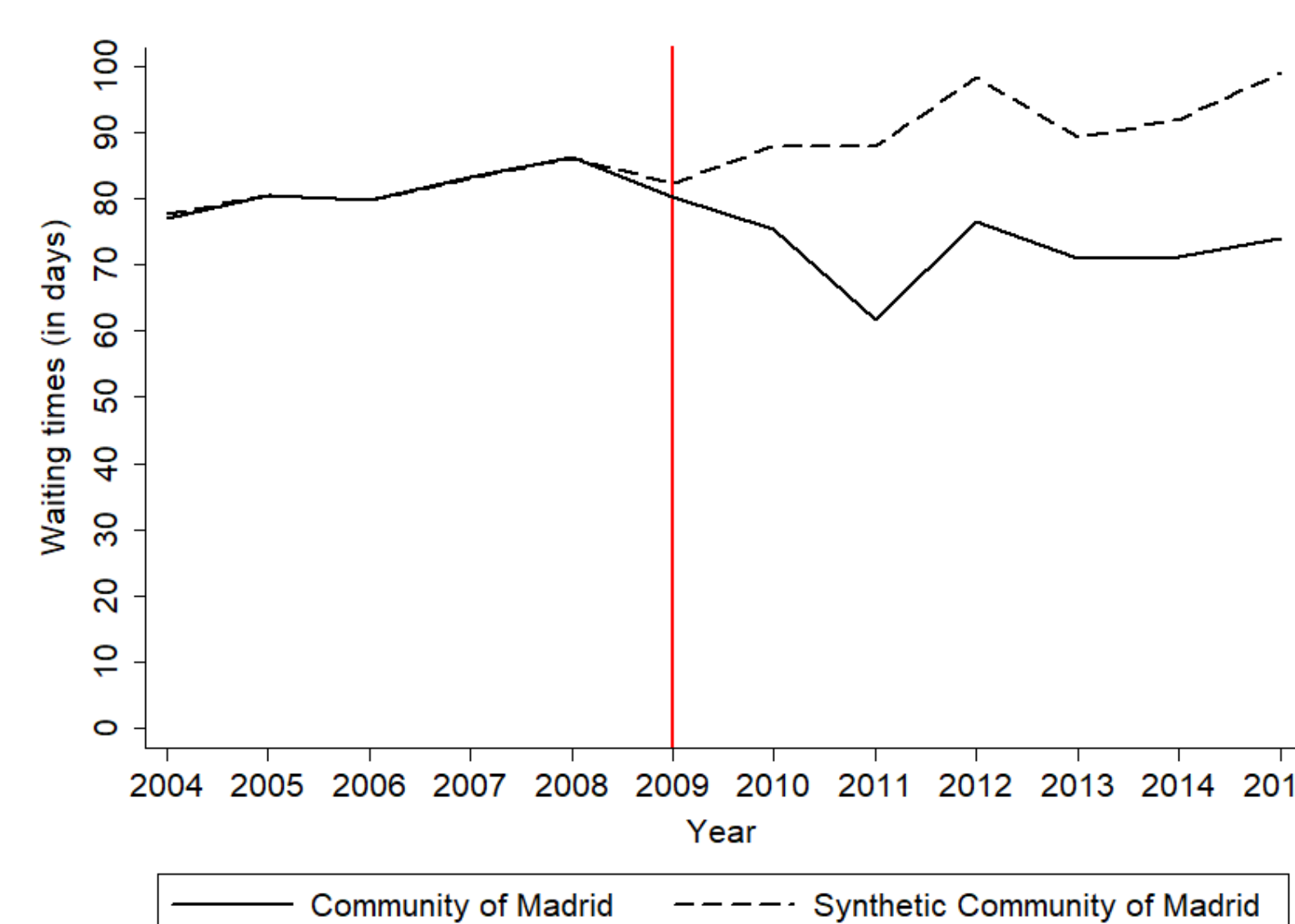


Figure 4

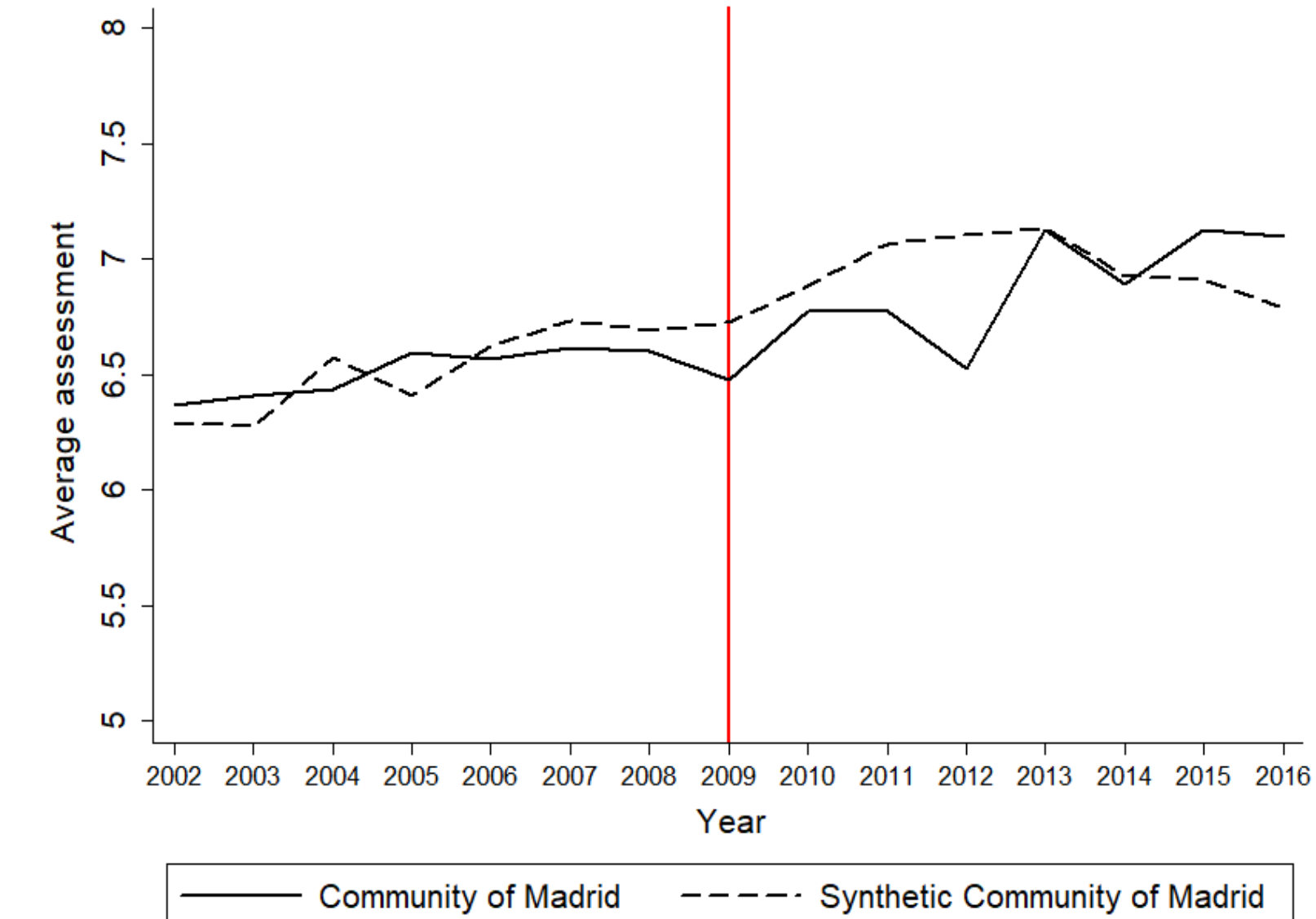


Figure 5

CONCLUSIONS

- This type of policy may improve the waiting times in the specialised care services.
- Why and how have the waiting times been reduced in the specialised care?
- The positive effect on responsiveness domains may be in the long run.
- Study the potential consequences of these results.

