

# Luck of the Draw: The Causal Effect of Physicians on Birth Outcomes

AMERICAN ECONOMIC JOURNAL-APPLIED ECONOMICS

**Publicado:**

Martes, 5 Mayo 2026

**Authors:**

[Christian Manuel Posso-Suárez<sup>a</sup>](#),

Jorge Tamayo<sup>e</sup>,

Arlen Guarín<sup>e</sup>,

Estefanía Saravia<sup>e</sup>

Ver más

<sup>a</sup>Banco de la República, Colombia

<sup>e</sup>Externo

[Descargar documento](#)

## Lo más reciente

[Evaluación de los efectos de las recientes normas de provisiones sobre la asignación del crédito de consumo en Colombia](#)

Diego Fernando Cuesta-Mora, Fredy Alejandro Gamboa-Estrada, Camilo Eduardo Sánchez-Quinto

[Educación e inclusión financieras en América Latina y el Caribe: programas de los bancos centrales y las superintendencias financieras](#)

María José Roa-García, Gloria Amparo Alonso Masmela, Nidia García Bohórquez, Diego A. Rodríguez-Pinilla

[Deuda Pública, Expectativas sobre el Déficit Fiscal y su Transmisión al Componente Cíclico de las Tasas de Interés de Largo Plazo](#)

José Vicente Romero-Chamorro, Hernando Vargas-Herrera

[Otras Publicaciones](#)

AMERICAN ECONOMIC JOURNAL: APPLIED ECONOMICS (FORTHCOMING)

## Abstract

This paper studies whether more skilled physicians improve birth outcomes. We exploit a natural experiment in Colombia, where newly graduated physicians were randomly assigned to Local Health Centers (LHCs), to estimate the causal effect of being treated by a more skilled physician—measured using medical graduation exam scores—on newborn health. We find that mothers treated at LHCs assigned physicians with exam scores one standard deviation higher were 9.14 percent less likely to give birth to an unhealthy newborn. Suggestive evidence indicates that more skilled physicians achieve these results by better targeting prenatal care toward high-risk mothers without reducing care for others.