

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^a](#),

Jorge Tamayo^e,

Arlen Guarín^e,

Estefanía Saravia^e

Ver más

^aBanco de la República, Colombia

^eExterno

[Descargar documento](#)

Lo más reciente

[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

[Borradores de Economía - Corto vs mediano plazo: movimientos del tipo de cambio, inversión y la composición por monedas de las hojas de balance](#)

Juan Camilo Medellín-Martínez, Sergio Restrepo Ángel

[Oportunidades negadas: radiografía de la exclusión y el trabajo precario para la juventud en Cartagena](#)

Andrea Sofía Otero-Cortés, Karina Acosta, Jhorland Ayala-García, Oriana Álvarez Vos, Sara Rojas

[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.