

Treating Doctors: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Surgery (joint with Naomi Friedman-Sokuler, Juan Pablo Atal, and Jorge Ale-Chilet)

Abstract

Managing experts is a common challenge. We implement a field experiment in a large public hospital to investigate whether a cheap, scalable, non-financial intervention can promote cost-effective health care among medical professionals. Our intervention, designed to motivate surgical teams to reduce excessive use of disposable items, includes customized informational messages targeting many types of surgeries and items. We randomly vary whether the surgeon, the circulating nurse, or both receive the intervention. We find that treating the surgeon, with or without treating the nurse, reduces the costs of targeted disposable equipment by 9-11%. We exploit administrative and survey data to examine design and organizational factors that mediate the effectiveness of the intervention, and to explore broader implications for shifting expert behavior.