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The Effect of College Education on Mortality

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ABSTRACT

We exploit exogenous variation in years of completed college induced by draft-avoidance behavior during the Vietnam War to examine the impact of college on adult mortality. Our estimates imply that increasing college attainment from the level of the state at the 25th percentile of the education distribution to that of the state at the 75th percentile would decrease cumulative mortality for cohorts in our sample by 8 to 10 percent relative to the mean. Most of the reduction in mortality is from deaths due to cancer and heart disease. We also explore potential mechanisms, including differential earnings and health insurance.

(JEL: I1, I2, J1)

Keywords: education; mortality; instrumental variables; Vietnam draft, **College**

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