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The Vaccination Kuznets Curve: Do Vaccination Rates Rise and Fall with Income?

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Abstract

This paper presents a new stylized fact about the relationship between income and childhood vaccination. It shows vaccination rates first rise but then fall as income increases. This pattern is observed in WHO country-level panel data, and in US county-level panel and individual-level repeated cross-section data. This data pattern suggests that both low and high-income parents are less likely to follow the standard vaccination schedule, and that such behavior is reflected in the vaccination rate at the population level. I provide several alternative explanations as to why we observe this data pattern, including avoidance measures, medical care, and social segregation.

JEL: H41, I12, I15

Keywords. avoidance, income, immunization, infectious disease, medical care, NIS, childhood vaccination

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