Children of the Mortality Revolution
– Infectious Disease and Long Run Outcomes

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Abstract

Reducing infectious diseases in developing countries has become a major social objective. This paper studies how the experience of infectious diseases during childhood affect economic well-being in adulthood. We examine children born and grew up during Mortality Revolution (1900-1955), an era when US successfully controlled infectious diseases with public health projects and medical advancements. We estimate their disease exposure by exploiting both the pre-intervention mortality and the changes in mortality due to public health projects and medical advancements. We found that these interventions contributed to roughly fifteen percent of the changes in labor market outcomes between the 1900 and the 1960 cohort. The Mortality Revolution is commonly divided into two periods– First Mortality Revolution (1900-1936) and the Second Mortality Revolution (1937-1955). The effect per death prevented is stronger in the Second Mortality Revolution, plausibly due to the type of interventions during this period.

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