Life in the Health Lane: The Professional Trajectories of Healthcare Workers in Colombia

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**Abstract**

This paper provides new insights into the initial career trajectories of Colombian healthcare professionals, analyzing their health risks, labor market outcomes, and graduate school enrollment. Leveraging comprehensive longitudinal administrative records for the universe of physicians, nurses, dentists, and bacteriologists, we employ a staggered event study framework to examine their early-life trajectories before and after their bachelor studies between 2008 and 2022. Key findings reveal that the prevalence of mental disorders increases for dentists and nurses after graduation, whereas for physicians, it decreases. Furthermore, our analysis sheds light on the limited evidence concerning adverse health trajectories, uncovering increased probabilities of emergency room visits and hospitalizations after graduation, particularly for nurses. Finally, our findings reveal substantial returns in the labor market for health professionals, with persisting gender wage gaps and disparities in postgraduate enrollment.

***Keywords:*** Health Professionals, Returns to Education, Working Conditions, Earnings, Wage Gap, Professions, Mental Health, Health Behavior.

***JEL Classification:*** I11, I12, I26, J28, J31, J44.

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