

Assessing Effects of Exposures to DDE and PCBs on Premature Delivery via Ordinal Logistic Regression

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Case Study 1 - Stat 723

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Introduction

- **Framework:**

Dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene (DDE) and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) are chemicals that persist in the environment and get stored in fatty deposits in the human tissues.

⇒ Potential adverse effect on health

- **Question:**

Is exposure to DDE and PCBs associated with a higher chance of premature delivery in pregnant women?

Pregnancy timeline

- **Dangerous preterm:** delivery at 34 weeks or before (when main organs are underdeveloped)
- **Preterm:** delivery between 35 and 37 week
- **At term:** delivery after 37 weeks

Data collected by 12 centers contained gestational age (in weeks) of the mother, the DDE and PCBs concentration, socio-economic info and scores (race, occupation, education, income), amount of triglycerides and cholesterol in blood and smoking status.

Preprocessing:

- Drop obs. with gestational age > 45 (the world record)
- Standardize and average levels of PCBs¹

$$PCB_i = \frac{1}{11} \sum_{j=1}^{11} \frac{PCB_{ij} - \text{mean}_i(PCB_{ij})}{sd_i(PCB_{ij})}$$

- Mean impute of occupation, education and income scores
- Aggregate race into $race = 1$ if white and $race = 0$ if non-white

⇒ Total obs. = **2336**

¹This avoids the correlation between the PCBs. See the appendix.

- **Ordinal dependent variable:**

$$gestgroup_i = \begin{cases} \text{Dangerous} & \text{if } \#weeks < 35 \\ \text{Pre term} & \text{if } 35 \leq \#weeks < 37 \\ \text{At term} & \text{if } 37 \leq \#weeks \end{cases}$$

- **Adjusted measure for PCB and DDE** to estimate the level of *exposure*:

- 1 Computing total lipids using Phillips et al. (1989) and Bernert et al (2007) formula

$$lipid_i = 2.27 * cholesterol_i + triglycerides_i + 0.623$$

- 2 Setting²

$$adjDDE_i = \frac{DDE_i}{\log(lipid_i)} \quad adjPCB_i = \frac{PCB_i}{\log(lipid_i)}$$

²The choice of the log comes from a Box-Cox analysis of the log-likelihood, as in Li et al (2013)

EDA (I) - Exposures and gestational groups by race

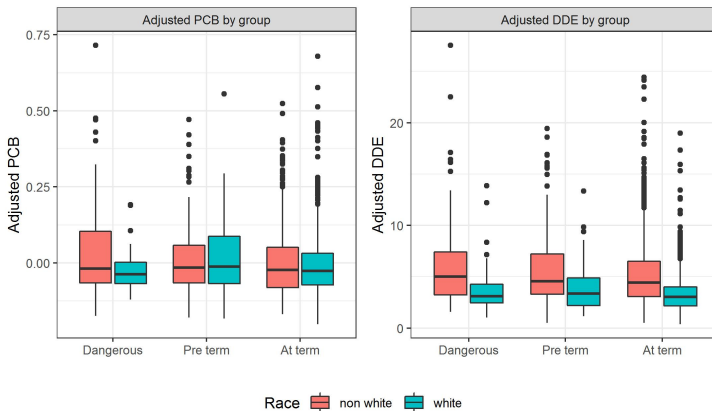


Figure: Relationship between gestation outcome and adjusted exposures, by race.

EDA (II) - Exposure across centers

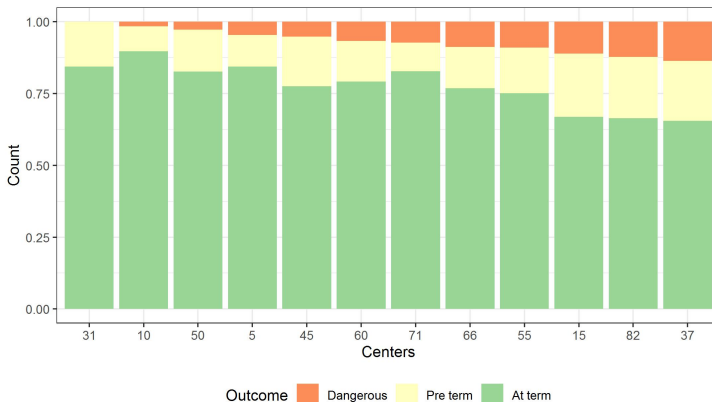


Figure: Distribution of gestation outcome per center.

Model - Ordinal Logistic Regression

We run the following ordinal logistic regression model:

$$\text{logit}(P(\text{gestgroup} \leq j)) = \beta_{0j} - \mathbf{X}\boldsymbol{\beta} + \epsilon$$

where $j = 0, 1, 2$ corresponds to the outcome level, and \mathbf{X} contains:

- *DDE*, *PCB*, *race*, *center*, *smoke*, the 3 scores, mother age [[main effects](#)]
- $(adjDDE + adjPCB) * (race + center)$ [[interactions](#)].

Bayesian ordinal logistic regression using the variables selected by AIC-based backward variable selection procedure.

- **Maintain** DDE , PCB , $smoke$, $center$, $race$, $(PCB + DDE) * race$
- **Drop** 3 scores, $(DDE + PCB) * center$, mother age
- uniform, and R^2 prior on coefficients
- Model assumptions are checked in the appendix.

MUST BE DONE

- very strong evidence of a detrimental effect of DDE on gestation
- some evidence of a detrimental effect of PCB on gestation
- effect of the chemicals is race-dependent

Graphical Results

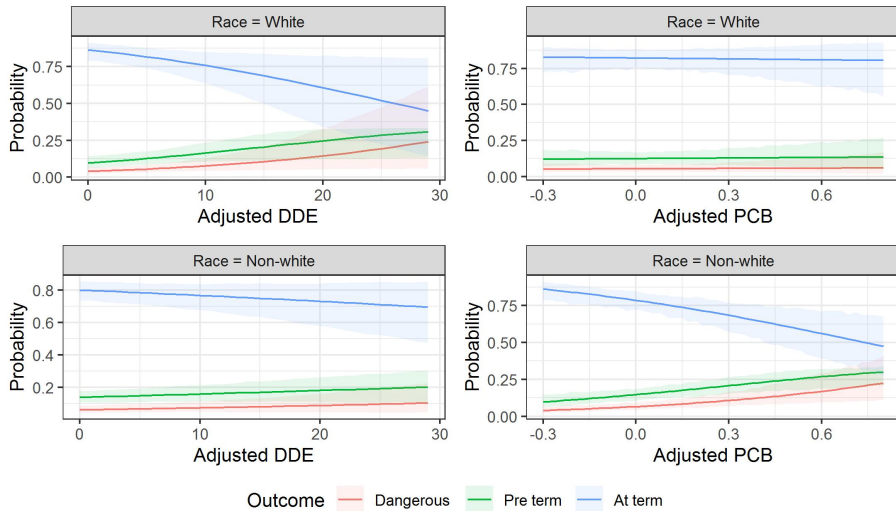


Figure: Estimated probability of gestation outcomes for DDE and PCB, by race.

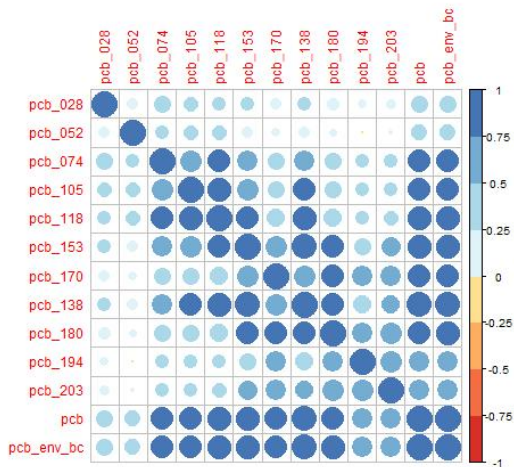
MUST BE DONE

References

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Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, 1989
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Appendix

More EDA



Appendix

Frequentist Model Checking

We can check the assumption of the (frequentist) ordinal logistic model by looking at the Surrogate residuals (Liu and Zhang, 2018).

If the model assumptions are correct, then the surrogate residuals R_S will have three properties:

- 1 $E(R_S|X) = 0$
- 2 $Var(R_S|X) = c$, the conditional variance of R_S is constant
- 3 The empirical distribution of R_S resembles an explicit distribution that is related to the link function $G^{-1}(\cdot)$. Specifically,
 $R_S \sim G(c + \int u dG(u))$.

Appendix

Frequentist Model Checking

Assumptions (i) and (ii) are checked with the Surrogate residuals plot. Both are satisfied in this case.

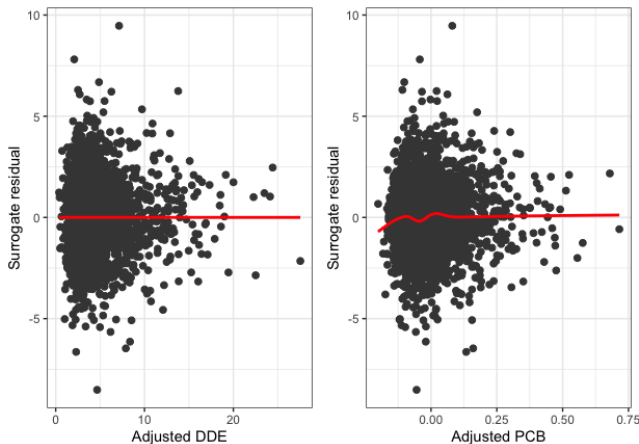


Figure: Surrogate residuals of DDE and PCB

Appendix

Frequentist Model Checking

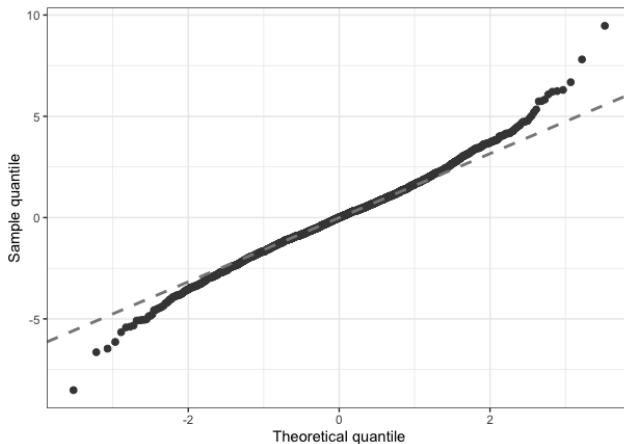


Figure: QQ plot of the Surrogate residuals