Fertility and Labor Market Responses to Reductions in Mortality

Author:Sonia R. Bhalotra, Atheendar Venkataramani, Selma Walther

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We investigate women’s fertility, labor and marriage market responses to a health innovation that led to reductions in mortality from treatable causes, and especially large declines in child mortality. We find delayed childbearing, with lower intensive and extensive margin fertility, a decline in the chances of ever having married, increased labor force participation and an improvement in occupational status. Our results provide the first evidence that improvements in child survival allow women to start fertility later and invest more in the labor market. We present a new theory of fertility that incorporates dynamic choices and reconciles our findings with existing models of behavior.