

Esther Duflo and Randomized Controlled Trails

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Esther Duflo

- 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics
- Professor in Economics in MIT

RCTs

But Abhijit immediately understood the power of RCTs, not just as a tool to evaluate programs, but as a way of turning development economics on its head by giving us the freedom to put any theory to the test.

– [Esther Duflo Biographical](#)

Noteable RCTs

- 1747 scurvy trial by James Lind (Tröhler 2005)
- UK Medical Research Council’s (MRC) trial of patulin for common cold in 1943 (Clarke 2006)
- The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab

Why RCTs had so much impacts

- Identification of causal effects (power of randomized)
- External validity?
- Observing unobservables
- Data collection
- Experiments

Read more: [Esther Duflo](#)

Thoughts for evaluation

- Natural experiments
- Causal identification strategies
- Pros and cons of RCTs

Further readings

- [Why randomized controlled trials matter and the procedures that strengthen them](#)

References

Clarke, Mike. 2006. “The 1944 Patulin Trial of the British Medical Research Council.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99 (9): 478–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680609900923>.

Tröhler, U. 2005. “Lind and Scurvy: 1747 to 1795.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98 (11): 519–22.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1276007/>.