Discussion of 'Offers of Appointments with Nurse Practitioners' and 'Access to Primary Care Physicians: Results from a National Audit Study'

James Woods

July 2, 2016

Design Issues

Problem: The use of fixed names to signal ethnicity

- Unclear if one or more names were used to signal race/ethnicity/gender combination.
- Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004) used different names by state.
- Lavender, A. D. (1988) found differences by city for categorization of names as Spanish, bicultural or English.
- The name choice may be a strong indicator in one city but not in another.

Recomend: (with a hint from Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004)) Include fraction of people with that name that identify as the desired ethnicity/race combination in the analysis. Decide if you want to use P(Race|Name) or P(Name|Race).

Additional Validation Experiment

Problem: Not all calls resulted in either an offer of appointment or not.

- Non-response could be important, e.g., *small* practices were censored and only *larger* practices included.

Recomend: Show that the treatments are still randomized over the observed sample.

Econometric Technique

Problem: Wait till appointment is contingent on appointment being offered

- OLS, or simple transformed averages, is inconsistent
- Effects of ethnicity, insurance, etc., is understated
- Baseline wait is overstated

Recomend: System estimation with multinomial probit/tobit on appointment offer: requested phy, other phy, PA, NP, none. Time till appointment is separate equation.

Included Variables

Problem: If patient name can indicate ethnicity, physician name can too.
Recomend: Include probability that physicians surname self identifies as one of the controlled ethnicity/race combinations.
Unrelated Recomendation: Number of calls required for response. I bet it is correlated with long waits for an appointment.

Number of Nurse Pracitioner Observations

Problem: You can only make those statements if the model is correct and those observations are exchangeable with the others, same correlations, same error distribution, parallel movement in other parameters.

- None can be verified or argued with the number of observations
- Not even enough to test via bootstrap or jackknife.

Recomend:

- Drop this issue or
- Switch to Bayesian or
- Propose a new grant funded study based on this tantalizing observation.