

The effects of becoming a physician on prescription drug use and mental health treatment

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There is evidence that physicians disproportionately suffer from substance use disorder and mental health problems. It is not clear, however, whether these phenomena are causal. We use data on Dutch medical school applicants to examine the effects of becoming a physician on prescription drug use and the receipt of treatment from a mental health facility. Leveraging variation from lottery outcomes that determine admission into medical schools, we find that becoming a physician increases the use of antidepressants, opioids, anxiolytics, and sedatives, especially for female physicians. Among female applicants towards the bottom of the GPA distribution, becoming a physician increases the likelihood of receiving treatment from a mental health facility.