

Learning by Doing and Slow Diffusion of Oral Contraceptives in Japan: Ten Years after the Pill Approval

Sayaka Nakamura
School of Economics, Nagoya University

Abstracts

Japanese government approved oral contraception in 1999, but the rate of pill use in Japan remains low. I examine determinants of Japanese women's choice of contraceptive methods by estimating multinomial logit models based on a web-based survey I conducted in 2009. Estimation results indicate that pill use increases with age, WTP for contraception, coital frequency, the experience of artificial abortion and of emergency contraception. These findings suggest that pill use increases as women learn from experience, and that low and declining frequency of intercourse offers one explanation for the slow diffusion of the pill in Japan. Additionally, prevalent pill use among women with higher risk of unintended pregnancy suggests that the pill approval might have significantly reduced unintended childbirth and artificial abortion despite the low average rate of pill use. Subjective probabilities regarding each method's effectiveness, disruption to the mood, the partner's disagreement, as well as the side benefits and minor side effects of the pill, are also important determinants of contraceptive choice. On the other hand, subjective probability that oral contraceptives seriously harm health has an insignificant effect on contraceptive choice, indicating limited influence of health scares regarding the pill on pill use. (194 words)