

Does Free Vaccination Improve Immunization Coverage of Poor Babies?

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Abstract

Beginning in 1994, the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program enables all uninsured children to get free vaccinations in the United States. Despite the importance of supply the free vaccination program, there has been extremely limited research focused on the effectiveness of this program. A practical obstacle has been the availability of national data on immunizations. While such data are now available, this paper uses the National Immunization Survey (NIS) and investigates how the introduction of free vaccination program affects immunization coverage of babies in low-income families. Using variation in the exposure to the free vaccination program of the child, I find that providing free vaccination is associated with an increase in uptake of entire recommended vaccines through in uptake of hepatitis B vaccine.

JEL classification: H51, I18

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