Physicians Treating Physicians at the End of Life:
The Relational Advantage in Treatment Choice

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Abstract

This study examines the agency problems by estimating the informational and relational effects of physician-patients on their invasive end-of-life treatment. To address potential issues of patient selection, we compare treatment intensity between physician- versus nonphysician-patients attended by the same doctor in the same hospital, and control for patients' previous choices of doctors. To identify the relational effect, we further compare the impacts of physician-patients specializing in the same area as their attending doctors versus those in different areas. Physician-patients receive more care than comparable nonphysician-patients, and the increased volume results mostly from physician-patients' relational advantages, not from their information advantages. *JEL: D83, I11, J44. Keywords: physician practice style; communication and information; end-of-life medical care*