

RESEARCH SEMINAR



April 12, 12 - 1pm

ESB 243 & Zoom

It's the Kids: The Gender Pay Gap Among Emergency Physicians



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Abstract: Despite progress in closing the gender pay gap over the past several decades, in both the U.S. and Canada a persistent gap remains at the top of the income distribution that has been attributed to “the spread of overwork in high-paying occupations” (Tolbert, 2022), also known as ‘greedy’ work. We explore the gender pay gap among emergency department physicians in one hospital practice plan using detailed longitudinal compensation and shift schedule data from 2013-2022, linked to physician household information (e.g., children, care responsibilities) and shift preferences collected via a survey. We document how the flexible design of physicians’ shift work and transparent, equitable compensation policies in this setting have successfully eliminated the gender wage gap. At the same time, we document a persistent and substantial gender earnings gap that is almost entirely explained by differences in total hours worked. We find that the birth and presence of young children substantially lower women physician’s hours and earnings, consistent with them taking on a greater share of childcare responsibilities at home. Unlike prior research, we show that this “motherhood earnings penalty” disappears quite quickly as children age. Our results support the importance of flexible job design and gender equitable compensation policies in reducing the gender pay gap, but highlight that even if organizations make high-paid work less ‘greedy’, we will still observe a gender gap among top-earners if women continue to be primarily responsible for early-years childcare.

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TOGETHER



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