Seminar on "Using Empirical Studies in Legal Scholarship: The example of health insurance on near-elderly health and mortality"

Empirical studies have now been widely used in legal scholarship. However, there remains methodological concerns in creating credible causal inference studies. In this talk, we use the illustrative example of health insurance on near-elderly health and mortality to illustrate how empirical methods can be carried out in legal scholarship to strengthen the causal inference strategies. In this example, we use the best available longitudinal dataset, the Health and Retirement Survey, and a battery of causal inference methods to provide both central estimates and bounds on the effect of health insurance on health and mortality among the near elderly (initial age 50-61) over an 18-year period. Those uninsured in 1992 consume fewer healthcare services, but are not less healthy and, in our central estimates, do not die sooner than their insured counterparts. We discuss why a zero average effect of uninsurance on mortality and health is plausible, some selection effects that might explain our full results, and methodological concerns with prior studies.

SPEAKER'S PROFILE

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Bernard S. Black is Nicholas D. Chabraja Professor at Northwestern University, with positions in the School of Law and the Kellogg School of Management, Department of Finance. He is also managing director of the Social Science Research Network, and founding chairman of the annual Conference on Empirical Legal Studies. Professor Black received a B.A. from Princeton University, an M.A. in physics from University of California at Berkeley and a J.D.
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