



Application number/Title: 24537 - Do childhood nutrition and health environments influence later life health outcomes?

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Keywords provided by the Applicant PI to describe the research project:

Health, rationing, NHS, nutrition interventions

Application Lay Summary:

1a: The project aims to investigate to what extent childhood nutritional and healthcare environments influence later life health outcomes.

Specifically we intend to examine the later life health outcomes of individuals born between 1930 and 1960. These cohorts experienced substantial changes to their nutritional environment through the introduction of the National Milk Scheme (NMS) in 1941 and wartime/post-war food rationing (1940-1954). The population saw a fundamental reorganisation of the healthcare environment with the introduction of the National Health Service, 1948. We will focus particularly on diet-related diseases, and those that are the most frequent causes of death.

1b: Examining infant mortality statistics from the Office of National Statistics over the study period of interest reveals reductions in mortality concurrent with these programmes. An important question remains as to whether any positive effects persist throughout the life course, which we address in this project. As these historic interventions bear strong resemblance to current policies, e.g. the Healthy Start scheme or bans or taxes on sugar, our analysis yields insights important to public policy formation.

1c: To analyse the impacts of the NMS and the NHS, we compare the health outcomes of individuals born in the immediate cohorts prior to and after the introduction of the each scheme, using a statistical approach known as a regression discontinuity design. It allows us to analyse each programme's impact whilst accounting for pre-existing trends. We will be able to differentiate between children who did not benefit from the respective scheme and those who received both pre- and post-natal scheme benefits. The rationing analysis will be based on differences in rationing rules by region and over time.

1d: Full Cohort. Although our analysis will focus on individuals born between 1930 and 1960 we request the data for the full cohort, which will allow us to explore the robustness of our analysis.