

Discussion of

“Pricing and Access: Lessons from Randomized
Evaluations in Education and Health”

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Discussion by

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The Four Questions

- 1) What are the effects of specific E&H programs on specific outcomes?
- 2) What is the right model of household decision making?
- 3) What is a good thing to do with money or power?
- 4) Why are some countries rich and some countries poor?

What are the effects of specific E&H policies on specific outcomes?

- This is good science – categorize and classify results.
- If you are worried about external validity, just repeat!
- Theory: red meat vs. sophisticated
- Conclusion: small fees do not yield program benefits.
- My reading is that health findings are more surprising than education findings.

What is the right model of household decision making?

- Initial fact is surprisingly low takeup of low cost treatments (Gollin and Zimmerman).
- RCTs produce additional *Prima facie* fact: extreme sensitivity to price (especially at zero) inconsistent with standard models.
- Procrastination / behavioral models?
- Information problems?
- Peer effects: in utility function or information processing?

What is a good thing to do with money or power?

- “more experimentation in these areas will be needed so that we can begin to generalize about the most effective ways of delivering social services.”
- Big theme of conference: who are we addressing? Bill Gates? The Finance Minister? World Bank? The Galactic Emperor?
- Is sustainability really an obviously good goal?
- Paper is thin on the bigger thinking about why government/NGOs should be providing certain goods. Saying “externalities” is not enough. What about just giving money (to women)?

Why are some countries rich and some countries poor?

- “That’s not science.” What about cosmology and history?
- “You can’t learn anything useful.”
- What does the RCT program tell us about this question? Are people in poor countries dumb?
- Maybe we should look at x-country RCT data!