

The Effect of Surgeon Breaks on Patient Health Outcomes: Evidence from Emergency Hip Fracture Care

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This paper explores how time breaks impact performance for the medical workforce. Using a large panel of orthopaedic surgeons in England, this study estimates the effect of surgeons' time breaks, measured by the number of days since their last surgery, on the health outcomes of emergency hip fracture patients. To identify a causal effect, I implement a surgeon fixed-effects model and exploit the variation in time breaks that arises from unanticipated emergency hip fracture admissions. Results show that short breaks of 4-6 days reduce 30-day mortality rates by around 6 percent. Notably, short breaks also lead to longer post-surgical length of stay and affect the type of surgical treatment. Overall, this suggests that the positive effects of surgeon breaks on patient health outcomes may be due to better treatment choices after short breaks.

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