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Governance And Mortality Rates In Brazil

Thomas Hone and coauthors (Jan 2017) highlight the importance of good governance, which—using microeconomic data—they found to have translated to better health outcomes in Brazil. The authors argue that Brazil registered significant reductions in amenable mortality rates (that is, “deaths avoidable through the provision of health care for those younger than age seventy-five”) in the period 2000–12. However, data from the World Bank indicate that mortality in Brazil increased by 0.5 percent during the same period.¹ In fact, in the period 2005–12, mortality rates increased by 2.7 percent. Given that the study by Hone and coauthors covered 1,622 municipalities, it would be interesting to know why the fall in mortality rates in these municipalities seemingly failed to translate into improvement in mortality rates nationally.

While we concur that strengthening governance is key for improving health system performance, our ongoing macroanalysis of health systems indicates poor governance in the

Brazilian health system, especially after the 2008 financial crisis.² The fall in the country’s commodity prices and real per capita government health spending, along with poor government effectiveness,³ worsened mortality rates by 0.4 percent in 2009. In light of this macro-level observation, it appears that relying only on microanalysis using fixed-effects longitudinal regression models has the potential to give results that conflict with those of macroanalysis. Thus, a combination of macro- and microanalysis can provide a more robust perspective on the Brazilian health system.

Cyprian Mostert and Pricivel Carrera
University of Twente
ENSCHEDE, THE NETHERLANDS

NOTES

- 1 World Bank. Death rate, crude (per 1,000 people) [Internet]. Washington (DC): World Bank; c 2016 [cited 2017 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CDRT.IN?locations=BR>
- 2 Mostert CM, Carrera PM. Achieving health systems’ resilience: the interactions between social health insurance and macro-finance. Unpublished paper.
- 3 World Bank. Worldwide governance indicators [Internet]. Washington (DC): World Bank; c 2017 [cited 2017 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=Worldwide-Governance-Indicators>