

Research Seminar in Health Sciences and Medicine, 19.10.2026

Location: Alpenquai 4, 6005 Luzern

Room: Break room

Time: 12.00-13.00h

Speaker: Martina Repetto, PhD Candidate, The University of Melbourne

Project: When Female Doctors Fly In: Access to Female Physicians and Health Care Utilisation in Underserved Areas

Session Information

Physician shortages in rural areas are a major policy concern worldwide, but whether workforce gender composition also affects healthcare remains understudied. Martina Repetto exploits a program that periodically sends a female GP to underserved towns where no female physician otherwise practises. On visit days, patients can choose between the visiting female GP and local male providers; on all other days, only male providers are available. Using within-patient variation, she finds that consultations with the female GP are 54 percentage points more likely to exceed 20 minutes. Differences are highly selective across clinical domains. Women consulting the female GP are 16 percentage points more likely to receive prescriptions for gynaecological conditions and 15 percentage points more likely to receive prescriptions for hormonal therapies, while prescriptions for other medications are unaffected. Access to the female GP also increases cervical screening by 12 percentage points against a baseline below 1 percent. Reduced-form and difference-in-differences estimates support these findings. The concentration of effects in gender-sensitive domains is consistent with previously unmet demand for gender-concordant care. Workforce composition, not only aggregate physician supply, shapes which health needs are met in underserved communities.

About the speaker

Martina Repetto is a PhD candidate in Economics at the University of Melbourne. She is currently visiting the Division of Population Health, Health Services Research & Primary Care at the University of Manchester. Her research interests are in health and labour economics, with a particular focus on gender and behavioural aspects.