

# Does Experience Make Better Doctors?

## Evidence from LASIK Eye Surgeries

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### ABSTRACT

It is a common belief that experience can improve the level of skills, which suggests that there may be some learning by doing with practice. Economists have tried hard to empirically determine the existence of learning by doing in the medical area, because of its important policy implications. However, it is difficult to define and measure health outcomes since they are affected by patient selection and underlying conditions, making it hard to disentangle learning by doing from other effects. In this paper, we use a ‘clean-cut’ medical procedure that allows us to overcome those confounding issues. We use refractive eye surgery, an operation with a well-defined eligibility criterion and objective measures of previous condition and posterior outcome, which depend minimally on post-surgical care. The data used in the study is a two-year longitudinal census of refractive surgery patients from one of the largest ophthalmologic clinics in Colombia. We collected the data from individual patients’ chart and we observe all information the surgeon accessed pre- and post-surgery. We found the modest learning by doing effect.

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