NUS National University of Singapore | Centre for Family and Population Research
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

CFPR SEMINAR SERIES (JAN-APR 2025)

SKIN TO SKIN CARE PREVENTS NEONATAL DEATH IN NORTH INDIA: EVIDENCE FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACILITY BIRTHS

21st February 2025
10AM - 11AM (SGT)
Zoom

Session chaired by:
Associate Prof. Kriti Vikram
(CFPR Deputy Director & Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

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The WHO recommends immediate skin-to-skin contact between a mother and her newborn baby. This applies to both healthy and premature infants. Although there is RCT evidence from a selective group of health facilities that this practice prevents neonatal death, there is less evidence from policy-relevant, population-level contexts. We fill this gap by exploiting a puzzling mortality advantage: Babies born in public facilities in north India are more likely to survive neonatancy than babies born in private facilities. Although babies born in public facilities are disadvantaged on essentially every observable marker of socioeconomic status, they are more likely to receive skin-to-skin care at birth. This paper predicts skin-to-skin care using the fraction of a baby's neighbors who are born in public, rather than private, facilities. This is not plausibly an endogenous consequence of a baby's own health, and is correlated with predictors of poor survival. And yet, we find that babies with a larger fraction of neighbors born in public facilities are more likely to survive neonatancy —but not after accounting for whether the baby received skin-to-skin contact.

OUR SPEAKER

Professor Diane Coffey
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

Diane Coffey is an associate professor of Sociology at UT Austin and co-executive director of r.i.c.e., a research institute for compassionate economics. She is a demographer who studies population health and social influences on health in India. An area of her research focuses on the intergenerational transmission of poor population health resulting from India's exceptionally poor maternal nutrition. Another area of her research finds consequences of poor sanitation in developing countries for early life health, including for mortality, height, and anemia. She has also studied the causes of open defecation in rural India. Her work has been published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Journal of Development Economics, Social Science and Medicine, and Demography among others.