

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0304-3878(16)30099-2
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2016.11.007>
Reference: DEVEC2110

To appear in: *Journal of Development Economics*

Received date: 1 August 2014
Revised date: 7 May 2016
Accepted date: 28 November 2016

Cite this article as: Achyuta Adhvaryu and Anant Nyshadham, Health, Enterprise and Labor Complementarity in the Household, *Journal of Development Economics*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2016.11.007>

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Health, Enterprise, and Labor Complementarity in the Household*

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December 1, 2016

Abstract

We study the role of household enterprise as a coping mechanism after health shocks. Using variation in the cost of traveling to formal sector health facilities to predict recovery from acute illness in Tanzania, we show that individuals with prolonged illness switch from farm labor to enterprise activity. This response occurs along both the extensive (entry) and intensive (capital stock and labor supply) margins. Family members who are not ill exhibit exactly the same pattern of responses. Deriving a simple extension to the canonical agricultural household model, we show that our results suggest complementarities in household labor.

Keywords: enterprise, health shocks, intra-household allocation, labor supply

JEL Classification Codes: I15, J22, L26, O12

*We thank David Atkin, Prashant Bharadwaj, Michael Boozer, Rahul Deb, Jason Fletcher, James Fenske, Josh Graff Zivin, Fabian Lange, T. Paul Schultz, Chris Udry, and seminar participants at Yale, UCSD, USC, and NEUDC for helpful comments. Adhvaryu gratefully acknowledges funding from the NIH/NICHD (5K01HD071949) and the Yale MacMillan Center Directors Award. All errors are our own.

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