



Departamento de
Teoría e Historia
Económica

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Título: When the Going Gets Tough: The Impact of Health Shocks on Divorce

Sala: E22

Hora: 12:30

Resumen: We analyze the impact of unexpected health shocks—defined as the sudden diagnosis of

cancer, stroke, or heart attack—on the probability of couple dissolution using longitudinal

representative data on older individuals (50+). We leverage the longitudinal nature of

the HRS and utilize a quasi-experimental research approach that creates counterfactual

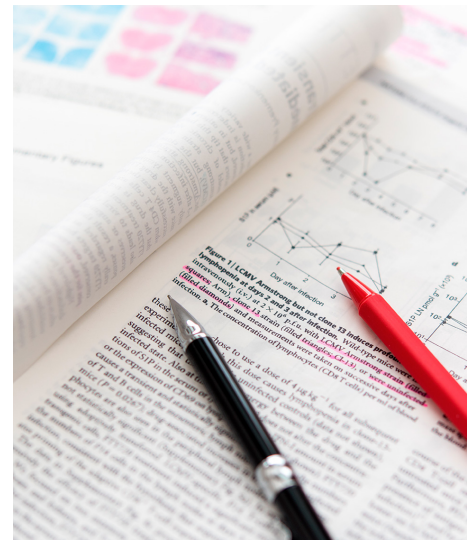
scenarios for affected households by comparing them to households set to experience the

same event in subsequent years. We find that experiencing a health shock significantly

increases the probability of couple dissolution by approximately 19% of the mean divorce

prevalence. This effect intensifies gradually over time rather than appearing immediately

after the adverse health event. Additionally, we examine several mechanisms



through which

health shocks may influence divorce, focusing on three potential channels: mental health,

cognitive decline, and financial strain. Our findings suggest that all three mechanisms

likely play a role in mediating the relationship between health shocks and the increased

probability of divorce.