

Thinking versus Doing: Cognitive Capacity, Decision Making and Medical Diagnosis

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Abstract :

We study impact of situational factors on decision making of physicians. Using detailed audit log data from emergency rooms, we assess how cognitive load during the shift affects future choices of tests as well as the treatment. We draw upon theories of information acquisition to infer how much is physicians' knowledge refined when making a particular choice. For instance, we find that high cognitive load implies that physicians make less informed choices in the future, perhaps choose to think less, and instead substitute this with more orders of diagnostic tests.