Elena Ashtari Tafti

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EDUCATION

University College London, UK — Oct 2017 – present

Ph.D. in Economics

Exams undertaken: Advanced Microeconometrics (*Distinction*), Behavioural game theory (*Pass*), Econometrics (*Distinction*), Macroeconomics (*Merit*), Microeconomics (*Merit*)

Master of Research in Economics

Thesis: Anecdotal reasoning in health care markets
Adviser: Prof. Marcos Vera Hernandez
Focus: Health Economics.

Bocconi University, Italy — Sep 2010 – Feb 2016

Master of Science in Economics and Social Sciences

Thesis: The relationship between competition and innovation: a matter of measures?, Grade: 8/8
Adviser: Prof. Chiara Fumagalli
Focus: Industrial organization, Economics of innovation.

Bachelor in Economics and Business

SCHOLARSHIPS

Institute of Fiscal Studies, Graduate Scholarship, UK — Oct 2017 – present
Economic and Social Research Council Scholarship

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Competition and Markets Authority, Chief Economist Team, UK — Aug 2016 – Mar 2017
Graduate Research Student
Focus: Scrutiny of hospital mergers and their impact on the quality of secondary care providers

European Central Bank, DG Research, Germany — Oct 2015 – Jul 2016
Junior Consultant
Focus: Analysis of within sector firms productivity differentials

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCES

Europe Economics, Policy Consultancy — Mar 2017 – Sep 2017
Analyst
Focus: Patents, intellectual property rights, mergers

European Commission, DG Competition, Belgium — May 2015 – Oct 2015
Stagiaire
Focus: Analysis of mergers in manufacturing industries
Cases: General Electric-Alstom, Staples-Office Depot, CNRC Pirelli

TEACHING

University College London, UK — Oct 2018 – present
Teaching Assistant
- Economics of Competition Policy (Master)
- Game Theory (BSc)
- Health Economics (Master)
- Statistics (BSc)

LANGUAGES

Italian: native.
English: advanced (speaking, reading, writing).
Spanish: intermediate (reading, writing); fluent (speaking).

SKILLS

MATLAB, Stata, E-Views, Tableau.

INTERESTS

Psychiatry, Psychology, Behavioural Psychology, Biology.

REFERENCE

Marcos Vera Hernandez
Associate Professor
University College London
London, United Kingdom

London, 21st September 2018

RE: Elena Ashatari Tafti

I am delighted to write in support of Elena Ashatari Tafti, who has applied to the Health Economics NBER Boot Camp. Elena is in the first year of the PhD at the Economics Department at UCL, and I am her primary advisor. Elena finished the PhD courses in May, and is writing her first year paper.

Elena is one of these very rare students who exhibits great sparkle but is also very well tooled-up. She is extremely original in her research ideas. In our first meeting, she already told me that she wanted to write her first paper on anecdotal information/reasoning and health care providers. The paper "The Market for Quacks" published in The Review of Economics Studies gives some tight predictions that, in the presence of such reasoning, providers will obfuscate consumers and the variance of quality (within providers) will increase when competition increases. In her first paper, she is using the Hospital Episode Statistics (a census of all hospital admissions in the UK), combined with competitive hospital reforms in the UK, to test this hypothesis.

She has also come up (completely on her own) with another test for anecdotal reasoning. She has identified "unusual deaths" in hospitals: unusual deaths because of the age of the patient and specialty of admission. She goes and tests whether such deaths have an effect on the referral patterns of the doctor that referred the patient, and in particular, if the referring doctor refers less to that hospital, and how long the effect lasts. To put this in perspective, think that she just finished the PhD courses in early June of this year, and already is doing very original and interesting work.

Elena is also very competent technically. She obtained a Distinction in the Econometrics, and Advanced Microeconometrics PhD courses, and good grades in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics. She had no problem implementing some of the procedures that Martin Gaynor, Carol Propper, and Stephan Seiler implemented in their 2016 AER paper. She also has a lot of experience working with the Hospital Episodes Statistics, and prior to entering the PhD, she worked on the analysis of hospital mergers.

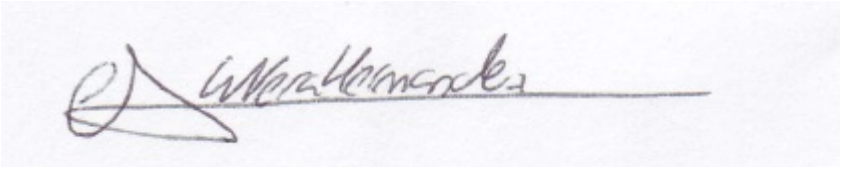
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Elena will be an asset to the Boot Camp. She is always ready to talk to faculty and other students. She is a pleasure to talk to. I am sure that she will be a very active contributor to the discussions of the Boot Camp. I also think that her knowledge of European health systems/data will add a nice contrast to her contributions.

I recommend her in the strongest possible terms.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information.

Yours faithfully,



Marcos Vera-Hernández
Associate Professor
Economics Department
University College London

NBER,
1050 Massachusetts Ave,
Cambridge,
MA,
USA

To the kind attention of the National Bureau of Economic Research:

I am pleased to attach my CV and essay in application for the Health Economics Boot Camp.

My primary research focus is the study of health care providers behaviour and strategic response to individuals bounded rationality. I believe my research interests have a clear link to the topics that would be discussed in the Boot Camp, and I would be glad to contribute to the debate.

I have worked extensively with data from the National Health Service (NHS), one of the largest health care systems in the world. I did this both as an assistant economist at the Competition and Markets Authority (London) and as a graduate scholar at the Institute of Fiscal Studies (London). Working with healthcare data is in fact very challenging and few students have this opportunity. I have learned greatly while working with this data and I would be pleased to confront myself with other students and scholars which have had similar experiences.

My main motivation to join the Boot Camp is to broaden my research scope and gather first hand experience of issues relevant to the US health care market. I have grown fascinated by the challenges the US health system faces, and I am keen to work with data from Medicare in the future. The Boot Camp would allow me to get closer to this objective; meet scholars and students working on these topics, and learn from them.

I consider being a valuable addition to the Boot Camp because of my grounded expertise and passion for health economics. I would be honoured to have the opportunity to show you in person my commitment and interest for this field.

I look forward to hearing back from you and I thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Elena Ashtari Tafti

Essay - NBER Health Economics Boot Camp

Elena Ashtari Tafti

September 2018

My research interests lie in understanding health care markets and health care providers through the lens of industrial organization and behavioural economics. In the past years, I worked in applying IO models to the study of providers in the health care sector. The Boot Camp would be a great opportunity to develop new ideas, discuss research and learn from the most prominent practitioners in this field. I would feel privileged to participate.

I am fascinated by the study of markets in which the strategic response of providers to individuals' needs is non-trivial; the process of production and value added formation are somehow obscure and difficult to model; and the response of market actors to government interventions is essential to the well-being of society as a whole. One of these markets is the health care market.

My interest in health economics is deep rooted. While working at the Competition and Markets Authority in London, I investigated the response of both individuals and firms to market consolidation; mergers and acquisitions have become very common in recent years. The purpose of my work was to create a structured econometric framework to evaluate mergers between hospitals. I estimated a demand model and analyzed the difference in the merging hospitals' elasticity of demand to quality[1] before and after the proposed acquisitions; a negative difference would have suggested that the merger might lower hospitals' incentives to provide high quality care to patients. I was genuinely fascinated by the econometrics involved in demand modelling and I developed the ambition of expanding my knowledge to more advanced topics in IO, and to novel empirical applications. As a result, I started my PhD at University College London within the Institute of Fiscal Studies' program for graduate scholars.

During my first year of PhD, I had the opportunity to delve deeper into the study of healthcare markets. I worked with the Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data, and applied some recent behavioural models to the study of issues which arise in health care markets (Spiegler (2005), Spiegler (2006)). Concretely, my more recent work studied the influence of anecdotal reasoning in both primary and secondary markets for health care. I empirically analyzed whether hospitals strategically respond to the use of anecdotes in the selection of secondary providers, and I investigated doctors' response to health care anecdotes. Mimicking an experimental setting, I show that GPs' referrals respond to anecdotes but only in the short term. In particular, I identified in the data events with the potential of affecting GP's perception

[1] The starting point for this work was the model proposed in Beckert, W., Christensen, M., and Collyer, K. (2012), "Choice of NHS-funded Hospital Services in England".

of the hospital without conveying much information on the quality of the provider as a whole. I focused on a specific type of casualty that in my view can become a powerful anecdote: the unforeseen death of a young individual which has been referred to a secondary care provider.

In my future research, I intend to further investigate both doctors and hospitals behaviour under the framework of bounded rationality. I plan to do this theoretically and empirically. I am interested in non-rational decision making. I want to to enrich the psychology of agents in health care models and explore how bounded rationality, a potential source of market frictions in this sector, shapes primary and secondary care providers' incentives to deliver quality to patients. Moreover, I want to study the allocation of resources within hospitals and investigate the bargaining game between managers to "win" resources over other departments. Lastly, I want to understand how the supply of health works and the relationship between inputs and output in this sector.

Among all the things that contributed to my desire to join the NBER Boot Camp, three ultimately fostered my determination to apply. First, I want to learn from the most prominent scholars in this field and the Boot Camp would allow me to do so. It would be a privilege to learn and interact with the discussants. Second, I want to have the opportunity to discuss my current and future research interests with other students working in this field. A key process in research is the reciprocal share of interests and projects. I believe the Boot Camp would be the perfect place to connect with future practitioners, build on my ability to interact with individuals working in my field of interest, and discover new tools and practices in this research field. Lastly, I wish to gain an insight on the work NBER practitioners do and on their views on the future of health economics research. I was born and raised in Italy, where the health care system is publicly funded and managed, I have a strong fascination for market-based health care systems and the dichotomy between public and private. It would be a memorable learning opportunity to listen in scholars working in the US, hear their opinions and learn from their experiences.

I also believe that I have much to contribute to the NBER Boot Camp. Apart from my advanced knowledge in microeconometrics and behavioural economics, I have a consolidated knowledge on a variety of different European health care systems (e.g. Italian, German, Belgian and British) and I would be glad to share what I have learned over the past years.

Health economics is a promising field of research, a sector where market forces will continue to take a larger role, and where the performance of providers is at the heart of people's well being. I want to contribute to the development of economic research in this field and I believe the Boot Camp would be the perfect starting point to do this.

References

Beckert, W., Christensen, M., and Collyer, K. (2012), Choice of NHS-funded Hospital Services in England, Economic Journal, Vol. 21, No. 560, pp. 400-417.

Spiegler, R. (2005), The Market for Quacks, The Review of Economic Studies Vol. 73, No. 4, pp. 1113-1131.

Spiegler, R. (2006), Competition over agents with boundedly rational expectations, Theoretical Economics, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 207–231.