I am an MD (Univ. of Washington)/PhD (Economics, UCLA) student, interested in pursuing a hybrid clinical-research career. I will receive the PhD from UCLA in June 2026 and be in medical school at the University of Washington during 2026-2030. During the course of my PhD, my research interests have shifted from labor economics to health economics.

One current research interest is the impact of expanding access to medications for opioid use disorder (OUD) on mortality. Unlike other substance use disorders, OUD has several effective medications that reduce mortality, including methadone and buprenorphine (a main active ingredient in Suboxone). They are usually taken for the rest of a person's life, and they have faced higher regulatory burdens than other medicines. Historically, they could not be prescribed by a typical primary care doctor. As a result of these factors, the availability of treatment for OUD varies widely by geography, yet we have little understanding of the impact of this place-based heterogeneity in access on opioid-related mortality. In one project, I am interested in using a part reduced-form, part structural approach similar to Finkelstein, Gentzkow, and Li (2026) to study the impact of heterogeneity in treatment access. I would leverage the elimination of a DEA Waiver requirement, which expanded access to buprenorphine starting in 2023, to explore the impact of place on initiating medication for OUD. A benefit of the structural component is the potential to explore how variation in treatment access has impacted mortality over a long period of time. I expect to find that place-based access to treatment changes the long-run evolution of OUD, so that moving to a high-access area gradually reduces mortality over many years. For this project, I am working on gaining access to pharmacy claims data. In separate work, I am also interested in studying the impact of expanding access to these medications in jails and prisons, which has been possible in recent years with funds from Medicaid Section 1115 waivers. Using data from Pennsylvania, I have found some evidence that providing these medications reduces recidivism and mortality. I am expanding this analysis to more states to improve its statistical power.

A second interest is the impact of street medicine. Finkelstein et al. (2020, NEJM) showed that healthcare hot spotting does little to reduce mortality, primarily because "super-utilizers" mean-revert after expensive stays. The clinical partner in that paper, the Camden Coalition, does something similar to Street Medicine providers in LA County, namely outreach-based primary care and social work. Rather than simply targeting high-cost patients, however, Street Medicine programs target ill patients who are experiencing homelessness. I think savings from this program may be more substantial due to more effective targeting and the higher severity of unsheltered homelessness. I am partnering with clinicians at the LA County Hospital who are expanding a Street Medicine consult program with an eye towards evaluation.

Other recent research interests that formed my dissertation span labor and health economics. The first paper uses the LEHD to investigate how information about outside opportunities flows more strongly through same-race connections, leveraging variation in the coworker networks of different workers within the same firms. The second paper, joint with Lorenzo Lagos and Edson Severnini, decomposes racial earnings differentials into bargaining and sorting components. The third paper studies the mortality reductions from Community Mental Health centers when they were first built in the 1970s to inform the rapid expansion of federal support for Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers in the present day.

My motivation for attending the workshop stems from the unusual position I am about to enter. I am preparing to begin four years of medical school, and this clinical training phase will pull me away from the economics community for the better part of a decade. Mentorship can help bridge this gap so that I can continue contributing to this field. I am seeking connections with researchers who share these interests and who would be willing to give feedback on my work and collaborate over a long horizon, so that the projects I have begun continue to develop even while my day-to-day attention is on clinical training. I also hope to benefit from others' experience navigating restricted data. I am keen to learn how others have gained access to IQVIA pharmacy claims, Veterans Health Administration records, and insurance claims data. In turn, I hope to contribute a clinical perspective as the other mentees develop their projects, helping them think through questions of treatment, care delivery, and feasibility that I will see firsthand.

Giovanni Righi

Contact

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Education

M.D., *University of Washington* — Expected May 2030

Ph.D. Economics, *University of California–Los Angeles* — June 2026
Chair: Martha J. Bailey
Dissertation: Essays in Labor and Health Economics

BS Ecology, AB/MA Economics, *University of Georgia* — May 2016

Working Papers

Workplace Racial Segregation, Search Frictions, and the Black-White Earnings Gap

Sorting, Relative Pay-Setting, and the Race Earnings Gap (with Edson Severnini and Lorenzo Lagos)

The Long-Run Impacts of Community Mental Health Centers

Completed PhD Courses

UCLA First-Year Core Sequence

Field Sequence in Labor Economics
(with Felipe Goncalves, Rodrigo Pinto, Maurizio Mazzocco)

Field Sequence in Industrial Organization
(with Martin Hackmann, John Asker)

Awards and Fellowships

Washington Center for Equitable Growth Grant ($15,000) — Aug 2022 - Aug 2023

CCPR NICHD T-32 Fellowship ($50,640) — Sep 2021 - Aug 2023

Foundation Fellowship (premier UGA undergraduate scholarship) — 2012 - 2016

Eagle Scout — 2012

Experience

Case Manager
Downtown Emergency Services Center — 2025

Lead the management of 35 cases in direct client service for client with complex needs, coordinating with nursing, medical, MOUD team, SUD treatment, and housing.

Research Lead
UCLA School of Public Health and Venice Family Clinic — June 2023-May 2025

Lead analysis of the impact of VFC's Street Medicine on health outcomes.

Economist Intern
Core AI, Amazon, Seattle, WA — June-July 2021

Used economic causal inference methods to study public relations and policy and reported these to senior leadership.

Research Data Scientist
Center for the Ecology of Infectious Disease, University of Georgia — 2020 - 2021

Combined economic causal inference methodology into a gravity model of disease spread to estimate the causal effect of nonpharmaceutical interventions on COVID-19 spread.

Data Analyst
California Policy Lab, UCLA July - Sep 2019

Predoctoral Research Associate with Isaac Sorkin and David Grusky
Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research 2016 - 2018

Presentations

Righi, G. Race and Outside Options: Evidence from U.S. Employer-Employee Data. UCLA Applied Microeconomics Proseminar, November 2021.

Righi, G. Substitution between SSDI and Healthcare. UCLA Applied Microeconomics Proseminar, May 2020.

Teaching

University of California, Los Angeles

Principles of Economics (ECON 1), Fall 2019
Introductory Econometrics (ECON 103L), Spring and Winter 2020
Data Science (ECON 104L), Spring 2021

Contributed Work

Goldsmith-Pinkham, P., I. Sorkin, and H. Swift. 2020 Bartik Instruments: What, When, Why, and How. *American Economic Review*. 110(8): 2586-2624.

Flaaen, A., M.D. Shapiro, and I. Sorkin. 2019. Reconsidering the Consequences of Worker Displacements: Firm versus Worker Perspective. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 11(2): 193–227.

I. Sorkin. 2018. Ranking Firms Using Revealed Preference. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133(3): 1331-1393.

Janzen, Sarah, Nicholas Magnan, Sudhindra Sharma, and William M. Thompson. 2017. Aspirations failure and formation in rural Nepal. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 139: 1-25.

Consulting

Auctionomics, Palo Alto, CA (2018)

Programming

R, AWS, PySpark, LaTeX, Git, Unix, SLURM, Python, Stata, MATLAB, SAS, PostgreSQL, basic C++

References

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