

## SEMINAR SERIES

# "Maternal Stress during Pregnancy and Early Childhood Development"

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### Abstract

There is now consensus that cognitive and non-cognitive skills developed in early childhood have a significant impact on future adult outcomes, and that in-utero healthshocks have significant impacts on children's outcomes at birth, and at ages seven or later. Little is known about the impact of in-utero shocks on children's early skills, developed before age 7. In this paper, we analyze the impact of prenatal stress on early cognitive and non-cognitive development of children by age 2. By exploiting a longitudinal dataset of children and their parents, we find that children who were exposed in-utero to maternal stress do not have different birth-weight relative to those who were not exposed, yet by age 2 exposed children had a lower level of cognition and more attention problems, relative to children not exposed to in-utero stress. We also find that the negative impacts on cognition occur during the first trimester of pregnancy. Furthermore, the negative impact on cognitive skills and development is concentrated on lower-income children and attention problems are caused among high-income children. Finally, we find that boys suffer lower development and worse attention problems as a result of in-utero stress, while girls' cognition is negatively affected.

(\*) Presenter

**Viernes 27 de Abril 2018**  
**11:30 hrs. Sala E-101**  
**Campus Viña del Mar - Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez**