Savannah Ellison

Department of Economics, Georgia Institute of Technology
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Education

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA
PhD in Economics; Minor in Higher Education — *Expected May 2027*
MS in Economics — 2026

University of St. Thomas, Saint Paul, MN
BS in Mathematical Economics; Minor in American Culture and Difference — *2022*

Research Interests

Health Economics, Applied Microeconomics

Job Market Paper

Less HIV Risk, More Syphilis: PrEP's Introduction and Risk Compensation

Abstract: *Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is highly effective at preventing HIV. By lowering the expected cost of risky sex, PrEP access may lead users to reduce other risk-mitigating behaviors, potentially increasing the spread of other sexually transmitted infections like syphilis. However, more frequent screening of PrEP users could increase syphilis detection even if underlying incidence does not change. I estimate the effect of PrEP's 2012 introduction on syphilis using cross-state variation in the pre-treatment share of households consisting of male same-sex couples (MSS) as a proxy for PrEP access. Using Medicaid claims data, I construct three syphilis outcomes that together distinguish a change in infections from a change in detection. I estimate that greater PrEP access, proxied by a one-standard-deviation higher MSS, increases the syphilis diagnosis rate by 26.0 cases per 100,000 beneficiaries, an 81% increase relative to the 2011 mean. This implies that greater PrEP access increased observed syphilis diagnoses, but it cannot disentangle whether this was driven by an increase in syphilis in the population or by increased detection following changes in screening. The yield rate, the share of syphilis tests that are positive, increases by about 59% relative to the 2011 mean. This suggests that a higher share of tests came back positive, which is consistent with an increase in underlying syphilis incidence. The estimated effect on the testing rate is about 7% of the 2011 mean and not statistically significant. Increased testing is therefore too small to account for most of the rise in diagnoses. Among men, the diagnosis rate rises by 39.5 cases per 100,000, and the testing and yield estimates are again positive but imprecise. Together, these results suggest that PrEP's introduction increased the underlying incidence of syphilis, which is consistent with PrEP access inducing risk compensation.*

Working Papers

Family Matters: Parental Health Insurance and Teen Contraception
with Melanie Guldi, Mayra Pineda-Torres, and Sarah Rosenberg

Works in Progress

The Effect of Economic Shocks on Personal Hygiene Consumption

Evolving Trends in Contraceptive Choice: Understanding the Role of Medical Providers
with Melanie Guldi, Mayra Pineda-Torres, and Sarah Rosenberg

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Georgia Institute of Technology *Summer 2024 – Summer 2025*
Supervisor: Dr. Jason Lindo

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record, Georgia Institute of Technology

- Statistics for Economists — Fall 2025

Teaching Assistant, Georgia Institute of Technology

- The Global Economy — Fall 2026
- Principles of Microeconomics — Summer 2023, Spring 2024, Spring 2026
- Behavioral Economics — Fall 2023
- PhD Math for Economists — Fall 2023
- Health Economics — Spring 2023
- Industrial Organization — Fall 2022, Spring 2023

Honors & Awards

President's Fellowship ($22,000) — 2022 – 2026
Joseph B. Owens Fellowship ($4,000) — 2023-2026
Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor (Economics) — Fall 2025
IAC Student Research Conference, Best Lightning Talk ($300) — Spring 2026

Presentations

2026: IAC Student Research Conference, ASHEcon, SEA*, APPAM*

*Scheduled

Skills

Programming: Stata, R, SQL, Python
Languages: English (native), Spanish (advanced)

References

Dr. Jason Lindo
Mary S. and Richard B. Inman, Jr. Professor of Economics
School of Economics
Georgia Institute of Technology
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Dr. Cici McNamara
Assistant Professor
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Dr. Mayra Pineda-Torres
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