Parental Age at Birth and Adult Mortality by Cause of Death: Evidence from Finnish Registers

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Abstract

Increasing parental age at birth is associated with negative early life outcomes, but the effects on adult mortality are not known. We study the effects of parental age on adult mortality of the offspring using a large register based sample of persons born in 1936-1950 with follow-up until 2007. Preliminary findings indicate that both maternal and paternal age at birth have a U-shaped association with the children's adult mortality. Cause-specific analyses suggest that the U-shaped association exists for most major causes of death, with the exception of cancer for which the risk of death increases monotonically with maternal age. These associations, however, are strongly modified when observed parental characteristics, unobserved family fixed effects, or parental survival are taken into account. Implications for the potential causal association running from parental age to adult mortality of the offspring are discussed.

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