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Washington Post Reporter says the U.S. Needs More Work Like IPA & J-PAL's

The Washington Post

Writing in an op-ed in the Washington Post, policy reporter Dylan Matthews wonders why IPA and J-PAL-style research isn't a routine part of US policy-making:

Each year, hundreds of carefully controlled, double-blind studies are done to learn whether a given pill is better than a placebo or whether a new surgery leads to quicker recoveries. Many of these studies are funded by a single agency, the National Institutes of Health. By contrast, in a typical year, no such studies are conducted to evaluate social policy proposals.

Matthews goes on to point out that IPA and J-PAL have shown it's possible to craft policy based on rigorous research into what what does and doesn't work for fighting poverty in the developing world, and asks why the U.S. isn't doing similar work.

It doesn't have to be this way. Congress should establish a policy-evaluation office, modeled after the JPAL or IPA, to run randomized, controlled trials on social policies. The office should have broad authority to do test-runs of proposals of its choosing, operating under the same rules of informed consent used in medical studies.

Read the whole piece here, what do you think - would it be doable for the U.S. to have an independent center for policy trials?

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