

Review of: "Impact of COVID-19 on imports of medical products: A panel data approach"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The present study attempts to analyze the determinants of the imports of 7 essential medical products by the 27 countries of the European Union (EU-27), for the period 2015-2020. The idea is nice and the paper is well-written. I have some remarks for the authors. I hope this will not refrain them from pursuing their scientific work and I wish them all the luck in improving the level of paper:

1. The main research question is centered around 7 medical products which were classified as essential for combatting COVID-19 by the World Customs Organization jointly with the World Health Organization (WHO). If so, what is the utility of conducting the analysis over the period 2015-2020? It would be more reasonable to conduct the analysis over the covid-19 period. More specifically, the authors have proposed many questions in the introduction: (Do imports of each of the essential medical products needed to combat the pandemic depend on the same factors? Are extra-EU suppliers at a disadvantage compared to intra-EU suppliers? Has there been a significant change in 2020 compared to previous years in imports of medical products classified as essential? Are imports of medical products price sensitive?) I do not believe that they have succeeded in answering all of them.
2. In the introduction, there is a large paragraph (describing in detail the seven medical categories under study). It is recommended to shift it to the methodology section. Instead, the authors are invited to add a paragraph that briefly explains their main findings.
3. In the introduction, it is also advisable to add the appropriate source/or reference for the following statement: "At the outbreak of the pandemic, 86% of the countries with a trade surplus in these goods imposed restrictive export policies, whereas only 46% of countries with a trade deficit did so."
4. Add captions/legends to the tables.
5. In the introduction, the authors mentioned that "temporary restrictions have been imposed on the export of these products in order to guarantee domestic supply". What did you not include or account for such variable?
6. The literature review should be improved. The authors should include the main economic theories that lay behind such topic and then include previous empirical studies in a very synthetic manner.
7. In the descriptive results, the authors have mentioned: "Germany is the top importer of all the medical products analysed, while the minimum values correspond to extra-EU imports of products by Latvia (*test kits*), Luxembourg (*disinfectants, medical consumables and oxygen therapy equipment*), Estonia (*medical devices*) and Malta (*protective garments and vehicles*)." Could you please include the related table? I did not see any table that clearly indicates such findings.

8. The econometric analysis should be improved. It is recommended to conduct some robustness tests. For instance, one test could be to eliminate Germany since it heads the intra-European imports (except for *disinfectants*) and accounts for a significantly high share of most products, to test if the relationship would persist. Another test would be to concentrate on the years 2019-2020 (pandemic time). Add new variables and rerun the regression. A moderating effect between two important variables is also advisable (could be: GPD and population age/ Covid-19 and population age....).
9. The interpretation of results should be strengthened and the implications of the study constitute a very important part (economic, macroeconomic, social, and health implications). What is good about the findings of the study? Stating that the rich and aged EU countries recorded the highest import levels is a normal finding. What is the main contribution of such findings? It is also important to state the limitations of the study.
10. Some references are incomplete (missing DOI).