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Health implications of elder spouses' spatial separation due to migration**Yanjun Gao**

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Dramatic changes in Chinese economy have led to an enormous wave of migration, and this is a trend that has long been underestimated among middle and old aged people. According to the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China, migrants aged 45 or older take up 20.04% of the overall migrants, and statistics have shown that the migration of elders has been increasing in recent years. The spatial separation of an increasing number of spouses is an important impact of migration (Chen 2015), therefore, the impact of this spatial separation due to migration on middle and old aged adults becomes an important question. This study focused mostly on the health impact, as elders are particularly vulnerable to health problems. We examined whether the health benefits of marriage extend to middle and old aged individuals in China who are spatially separated from their spouses using 3 waves of CHARLS longitudinal data (2011, 2013, 2015). We compared the physical and mental health across different marital status using both OLS regression and panel methods. Our results suggest a clear mental health disadvantage of married individuals whose spouses are absent compared with those whose spouses are living in the same household. Furthermore, longer spousal absence is more harmful to individuals' mental health. Finally, we identified that loneliness is a possible mechanism through which spouses' mental health is affected, especially for females. But we did not find any physical disadvantage in this process.