Inequality and Health Through the Lifespan

Taking action to reduce health inequalities is a matter of social justice. In developing strategies for tackling health inequalities we need to confront the social gradient in health, not just the difference between the worst off and everybody else. There is clear evidence when we look across countries that national policies make a difference and that much can be done in cities, towns, and local areas. But policies and interventions must not be confined to the health care system; they need to address the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. The evidence shows that economic circumstances are important but are not the only drivers of health inequalities. Tackling the health gap will take action, based on sound evidence, across the whole of society and across the whole lifecourse.

Health Equity and the Lifecourse

Professor Sir Michael Marmot MBBS, PhD, FRCP
Director, Institute of Health Equity, University College London

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The Roots of Inequality: Early-Life Adversities & Adult Health

Chioun Lee, PhD
Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of California Riverside

Recent studies estimate that about half of U.S. adults were exposed to one or more adversities as children, including abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, or low socioeconomic status. Stressful experiences in childhood may be linked to a wide array of health problems, even decades after the adversity occurred. Thus, understanding the socioeconomic, psychological, and biological pathways that are responsible for these associations is a critical public health issue. This talk will focus on how and under what conditions early-life adversities compromise health in midlife and old age and whether these relationships differ for men and women.

Socioeconomic and Racial Health Disparities in the US: Recent Research and Notable Future Directions

Thomas Fuller-Rowell, PhD
Associate Professor, Human Development & Family Studies, Auburn University

Social inequality has increased substantially in recent decades and has become a salient social problem in many societies around the world. This lecture will review recent trends in socioeconomic and racial health disparities in the United States and describe examples of recent research examining mechanisms for disparities at particular points in the life span. Promising future directions for the science of health disparities will also be discussed.

Health Disparities: Who is at Risk and How Does Risk Get Under the Skin?

Jennifer Morozink Boylan, PhD
Assistant Professor, Health & Behavioral Sciences, University of Colorado Denver

Growing inequality is a defining feature of our era. Risks for poor health track with inequality; they are higher among less advantaged individuals compared to those more advantaged. However, socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals bring unique psychological profiles to their experiences, and these psychological differences matter for understanding risks for poor health through different pathways. This talk will focus on psychological well-being as a protective factor among socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals as well as address how responses to stress may be a key biological pathway that helps us understand who is at risk for poor health and who is resilient.