
In this number

Debates and dialogues

In this issue, Suzanne van de Vathorst and Carlos Alvarez-Dardet begin a debate about individual responsibility for health, victim blaming and the issues raised by doctors acting as judges in relation to the risky behaviour of their patients. In a challenging response, Stuart Horner robustly argues Hippocrates' line that "recovery depended upon a combination of actions by the patient, actions by the doctor and upon favourable circumstances". This debate should generate a response from many readers, and letters will be most welcome.

The context for the above debate is a strong set of papers, including several on social aspects of differences in health status and the interface between individual, social and environmental aspects of health. There is new information on inequalities in health from Korea, and on the social geography of type 2 diabetes mellitus in deprived areas of the United Kingdom. We carry the latest report on

the classic longitudinal study of Whitehall civil servants, and explore aspects of unemployment and health in relation to mental health after childbirth in France and work conditions and social support in Sweden.

There are interesting insights on the implications of income non-reporting for inequalities research, discussions of definitional variations of low back pain and the validation of the self diagnosis of high blood pressure. In the section on Public Health Practice, there are valuable findings from a programme to prevent falls and near falls among older people in Australia.

As we settle into this millennial year, readers are reminded that suggestions for developments of the journal, novel contents and editorials will be gratefully received.

JOHN ASHTON
Joint Editor