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*In this number*

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## Housing matters

Public health practitioners all over the world are aware of the crucial importance of housing conditions in shaping the health of populations. In contrast, the relations between housing and health rarely attract the interest of mainstream researchers in epidemiology and public health. Risk factorologists have agreed on measuring personal options like smoking or drinking, but not on appraising in a reliable way structural influences on health. As a result of this, public health housing standards worldwide are mainly based on the 19th century knowledge base focused on cholera and tuberculosis. For the past 15 years the Healthy Cities movement has tried to mainstream urban infrastructures, and housing quality among them, in the public health agenda worldwide. But still we lack, and urgently need, an agreement on housing public health standards beyond sanitation, window size and overcrowding.

In this number of *JECH* readers interested in moving towards better standards for housing can find several papers of interest. The editorial section contains a worrying description of shelters in post-communist

Eastern Europe. Ian Macarthur gives details on what has been described as a “social time bomb”. Professor Nick Spencer contributes with two editorials commenting on two papers tackling two classic areas of his expertise as a social paediatrician: teenage pregnancy and the influence in adult life of structural resources (housing conditions among them) during childhood. In his view other methodological tools like path analysis could give better insights in these complex and hierarchical relations.

Last but not least, in the policy and practice section Ferran Ballester and his group from Valencia make a contribution studying environmental pollution and emergency hospital admissions for cardiovascular diseases. They confirm in a mild climate Mediterranean city the association between heart disease emergency admissions and air pollution and describe a new finding: NO<sub>2</sub> pollution seems to be associated with cerebrovascular episodes. Housing and urban quality matter.

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