

IN THIS ISSUE

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Joint Editors

ON AIR POLLUTION AND INEQUALITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH

This month's journal brings together a collection of papers focusing on the environment and raises important questions about environmental justice, a concept that has been current in North America for some years but that will still be new to many of our readers. We carry a glossary by Tunstall and colleagues on Places and Health that explores some fundamental concepts of geography that are relevant to our craft. Two editorials explore the issues of environmental justice as they relate to air pollution and health in the set of papers carried in our research section. The highlights of these are that:

- exposure to air pollution during pregnancy may interfere with weight gain in the fetus;
- traffic related pollutants might have contributed to the asthma epidemic that has taken place during recent decades among children;
- larger and more chemical intensive industrial facilities tend to be located in areas containing poorer people;
- and the impact of air pollution may be modified by socioeconomic conditions.

See pages 2–4, 6, 11, 18, 24, 31

Sticking with the environment in a different sense, neighbourhood levels of social participation seem to affect the levels of prescribing of anxiolytic and hypnotic drugs; and high levels of neighbourhood deprivation independently predict heart disease for both men and women.

See pages 59, 71

Of general interest, given the enormous social changes in recent years, is the finding by Willitts, Benzeval, and Stansfeld that the mental health of men and women varies depending on their partnership histories: being in a partnership is generally protective of mental health, mental health is worse immediately after partnership splits, and the negative outcomes are longer lasting in women.

See pages 53

Away from the environment, the association between physical violence and poor self reported health is significantly related in women but not in men; and patients with higher education have lower global coronary risk than those with lower education in the Czech Republic.

See pages 65, 47

Returning to the environment, and a follow up row about the paper we carried earlier this year on pregnancy outcomes around incinerators and crematoriums, the Letters column bursts to life with contentions that touch on the difficulties of carrying out these kinds of studies and the burden of proof of harm when causal relations are so hard to pin down.

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The Book Reviews sometimes get a mention here, and we would draw attention to a recent publication on community health advocacy.

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Finally, from Hygieia:

- doctors and the public considerably underestimate the negative impact of age related macular degeneration on health related quality of life (it is the most common cause of blindness in elderly people).
- in Danish tobacco smokers there is an independent risk factor for peptic ulcer disease despite controlling for *H pylori* status;
- current and ex-smokers have higher risk than non-smokers of experiencing body pain;

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