

IN THIS ISSUE

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Joint Editors

IN THIS ECLECTIC ISSUE, WE ASK WHETHER INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIC SOCIETY IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH AND TACKLE THE VEXED ISSUE OF TERMS RELATING TO ETHNICITY AND RACE

Social capital has become a focus for considerable tension in recent years, as researchers attempt to understand the mediating factors between structural aspects of society and health outcomes. The related question of “is involvement in civil society groups good for your health?” is tackled this month by Ziersch and Baum, who conclude that such involvement is good for a community but not necessarily for the individual. Meanwhile, another research area that is fraught with methodological problems, the definition of terms relating to ethnicity and race, is addressed in a Glossary from Edinburgh by Raj Bhopal. He leaves us with a set of challenges for epidemiological research. And to complete a triad of social science puzzles, Ann Bowling, in an Editorial linked to a research paper by a group from the Netherlands explores the factors leading to socio-economic differentials in mortality among older people.

See pages 493, 441, 438

Our growing section on Evidence Based Public Health Policy and Practice this month also includes:

- A qualitative study of ethical issues in public health practice in Scotland;
- Asking the question about the relative harm from tobacco taxation via financial hardship versus the impact of harmful smoking, Wilson *et al* conclude that policy makers should be reassured that tobacco taxation is likely to be achieving far more benefit than harm in the general population and socioeconomically deprived populations (but I assume

that smuggling of tobacco is not a problem in New Zealand as it is in the United Kingdom).

- In the context of an increasing emphasis on building public health capacity, we have a contribution from Australia describing a survey to inform workforce development.
 - Progress is reported from Barcelona on removing soybean dust in the city’s port and controlling the contingent asthma risk.
 - And finally, a case is made for the important contribution of vigorous domestic activities to physical activity. Presumably still mainly for women.
- See pages 446, 451, 455, 461, 466**

Our Research Reports include:

- A study of the use of a household crowding index on inter-pregnancy spacing.
 - A report of the continuing fallout from the reunification of Germany, with pronounced East-West gradients of mortality from ischaemic heart disease since the unification.
 - A study of the impact of maternal fish intake in late pregnancy and frequency of low birth weight and intrauterine growth retardation in a cohort of British infants. There is support for the hypothesis that raising intake during pregnancy may increase fetal growth rate, but no evidence that increasing fish consumption is associated with an increase in mean gestation.
 - Findings from the British Household Panel Survey 1991-2001 that having secure employment in favourable working conditions greatly reduces the risk of healthy people developing limiting illness, and secure employment increases likelihood of recovery.
 - From Belgium, findings that perceived high strain at work, especially combined with low social support, is predictive of sick leave in both sexes.
 - And the first study to show intergenerational associations between type II diabetes in one generation, and birth weight in the subsequent two generations.
- See pages 476, 481, 486, 501, 507, 517**

A paper in Theory and Methods describes the faltering attempt to develop instruments that are useful in identifying victims of violence during pregnancy.

See page 523

Gallery features a pioneer of modern occupational health from the United States in Linda Rosenstock who, in blurring the margins between individual healthcare delivery and public health has led the way in partnership development in the workplace.

See page 440

At a time when there is increasing interest in the impact of weather on public health, and the beginnings in some countries of collaborations between health departments and the meteorological offices, B C K Choi provides an original perspective on how public health practitioners can learn from the weather forecasters in the way we present information.

See page 450

A miscellany in Hygiene with highlights of recent work on tuberculin skin tests, asthma, HIV and other sexually transmitted disease issues, and the ethics of health services research.

See page 532