

# IN THIS ISSUE

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Joint Editors

## NEWS SCOOP—HOLD THE FRONT PAGE: "POVERTY DAMAGES HEALTH"

In this issue, we carry a number of research papers, which, in one way and another, address issues of poverty, deprivation, and health. For example:

- Geographical variation in life expectancy at birth in England and Wales is largely explained by deprivation.
- Is the rate of biological aging, as measured by age at diagnosis of cancer, socioeconomically patterned? Answer: it seems to be.
- Does material disadvantage explain the increased risk of adverse health, educational and behavioural outcomes among children in lone parent households in Britain? Answer: apparently yes.
- In Italy, income inequality has an independent and more powerful effect on life expectancy at birth than does per capita income and educational attainment; the relation between income inequality and population health has not disappeared.
- Material and behavioural factors explain more than half of occupational class differences in self related health among women and one third among men

Am I alone in feeling that it is time we moved on from painting a beautiful picture of the relations of poverty and inequality to health, to getting to grips with what we can do about it: which intervention points, which strategies, policies, programmes, and initiatives have the most impact? And what are the best ways to deliver them? Good as the science may be (of course with papers published in the *JECH*), are

there not more people out there who can address the salient questions of delivery and making a difference?

See pages 115, 146, 152, 158, 163

Other research papers this month include two reports from the Caerphilly cohort: one showing that for men whose birth weight had been low, having been artificially fed is associated with poorer cognitive function in late middle life; the other showing that there was little evidence of a protective influence of breast feeding on cardiovascular risk factors, incidence, or mortality.

See pages 130, 121

To complete a strong suite of research this month, we have:

- a paper from London showing that the duration and severity of obesity seem to limit the cardiovascular benefits of weight reduction in older men;
- the association of psychological distress with an increased five year risk of coronary heart disease in men could be a function of baseline physical illness, but an effect independent of physical illness cannot be ruled out;
- a focus on who you live with and where you live raises issues about cluster sampling units within study designs (this together with a linked Editorial).

See pages 134, 140, 170, 90

If, like the Boomtown Rats, you don't like Mondays, there may now be scientific support for your intuition. A meta-analysis and prospective study by Barnett and Dobson shows an excess of cardiovascular events on Mondays, with an association with greater alcohol consumption, lower rainfall, and the month of January. Make what you will of that.

See page 109

This month's Glossary is on the perennially relevant topic of social paediatrics.

See page 106

And, saving the best till last, Bernard Choi draws our attention to the urgency that now exists to find a way to handle all the new knowledge and publications that threaten to overwhelm us. See also this month's Aphorism.

See pages 93, 120

Poet Levi Tafari turns his attention to water, the liquid of life, while Gallery features America's latest food fad, "low-carb", and (linked to the latest paper in our new section on Public Health Past and Present) we explore how a food borne disease outbreak involving oysters was investigated in England 100 years ago.

See pages 92, 91, 94, 100

Tail-end Charlie is the ever brilliant E G Knox, whose findings about the relations between childhood cancers and atmospheric carcinogens are bound to arouse widespread interest.

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