



Closing the Gap: Global Health Equity and the Commission on Social Determinants of Health

A talk by Professor Sir Michael Marmot

Inequalities in health within and between countries are a significant feature of the global health scene. The WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health takes the view that health inequalities can be tackled by action on the underlying social determinants of health. Health inequalities that are avoidable or remediable are inequitable and addressing them is a matter of social justice.

The Commission on Social Determinants of Health was set up by the World Health Organisation to collate global evidence, raise societal debate and recommend policies with the goal of improving health and reducing health inequalities between groups. A major thrust of the Commission is turning public health knowledge into political action.

In developing strategies for tackling health inequalities we need to confront the social gradient in health not just the difference between the worst off and everybody else. There is clear evidence when we look across countries that national policies make a difference. But policies must not be confined to the health care system, they need to address the conditions in which people grow, live and work. The evidence shows that economic circumstances are important but are not the only drivers of health inequalities. The Commission on Social Determinants of Health has brought together evidence to show that policy action to improve the conditions in which people lead their lives is the route to health equity.

Professor Sir Michael Marmot is Director of the International Institute for Society and Health and MRC Research Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College, London. He has led a research group on health inequalities for the past 30 years. He is Principal Investigator of the Whitehall Studies of British civil servants, investigating explanations for the striking inverse social gradient in morbidity and mortality. He leads the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and is engaged in several international research efforts on the social determinants of health. He chairs the Department of Health Scientific Reference Group on tackling health inequalities. He was a member of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution for six years and is an honorary fellow of the British Academy. In 2000, he was knighted by Her Majesty the Queen for services to epidemiology and understanding health inequalities. Most recently, he was the Chair of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health that published its final report last August. He is the current recipient of the McLaughlin Gallie Visiting Professorship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada who have sponsored this visit to Montreal.

Thursday February 5, Noon to 1:30 pm

Auditorium Le Plateau

3700 Calixa-Lavallée (access by Sherbrooke St.)

(in the Le Plateau School behind the Direction de santé publique (DSP) de Montréal in Parc Lafontaine)

There is no charge for attendance but registration in advance is mandatory.

To register, please send your name and institutional affiliation to: itherien@santepub-mtl.qc.ca

To get to the Auditorium Le Plateau: Go to Sherbrooke metro station, take Bus 24 East to Panet St.

Paid parking is available in the public lots on the north side of Sherbrooke beside the DSP or on neighbouring streets.

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