Welcome to the symposium

Health inequalities in modern welfare states
Do we understand present trends?

Date: 23–24 January 2013

Life expectancy has been growing in the modern world, but this development is unequally shared. Health inequalities, measured as differences in life expectancy between segments of the population in one country, are large and seem to be growing steadily. This is equally the case for modern welfare states with advanced systems for social protection, such as the Nordic states, where life expectancy differences between educational groups have been growing for more than three decades.

Leading researchers will share new evidence from the European continent, Britain and Scandinavia on health trends. Explanations for the growing health gaps will be discussed. We will focus in particular on the role of education and discuss why modern welfare policies and a commitment to egalitarian policies do not seem to be enough to reduce health inequalities.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, together with the Inter Academy Medical Panel, are inviting you to a state-of-the-art symposium to discuss what we know, what we need to know and what the proper political responses might be to health inequalities in modern societies.

The symposium is sponsored by Stiftelsen Bröderna Jacob och Marcus Wallenbergs Minne.

Programme

23 January
13.00 Welcome
13.05 Session 1: Health differentials by education and social class
  Trends and explanations
  Introduction by Denny Vågerö, session moderator
13.15 Findings from the European Review of Social Determinants of Health and the Health divide
  Michael Marmot
13.50 New evidence on the persistence of health inequalities in modern welfare states: results of the EURO-GBD study
  Johan Mackenbach
14.25 Findings from the Danish Review on Inequality and Health
  Trends and explanations
  Finn Diderichsen
15.00 Coffee break
15.30 Session 2: The association between education and health. Is it causal?
  What are the mechanisms?
  Introduction by Robert Erikson, session moderator
15.40 Is education causally related to survival?
  Anton Lager
16.15  Does education have health effects on significant others?
       Jenny Torssander

16.50  Effects on the brain of intense education. Relevance for health?
       Martin Lövden

17.30  End of day

24 January

9.00  Session 3: The role and capacity of welfare policies to reduce health inequalities
       Introduction by Olle Lundberg, session moderator

9.10  Is there a welfare state paradox?
       Clare Bambra

9.45  The changing contribution of alcohol and smoking to social inequalities in life expectancy in Finland
       Pekka Martikainen

10.20  Can welfare policies influence the level and distribution of health?
       Espen Dahl

11.00  Coffee break

11.30  Session 4: Panel Discussion
       What are the political implications of our knowledge of health inequalities
       Introduced by Erling Norrby, session moderator
       Format: Anders W Jonsson and Lena Sommeståd (Swedish parliament) and Clive Needle (Eurohealthnet) question a panel consisting of Clare Bambra, Finn Diderichsen, Johan Mackenbach and Michael Marmot. Questions from the public.

13.00  End of symposium

The symposium is open to the public but registration is required. Please register at latest 21 January. For more information and registration please visit http://kva.se