

# Determinants of Health And Health behavior

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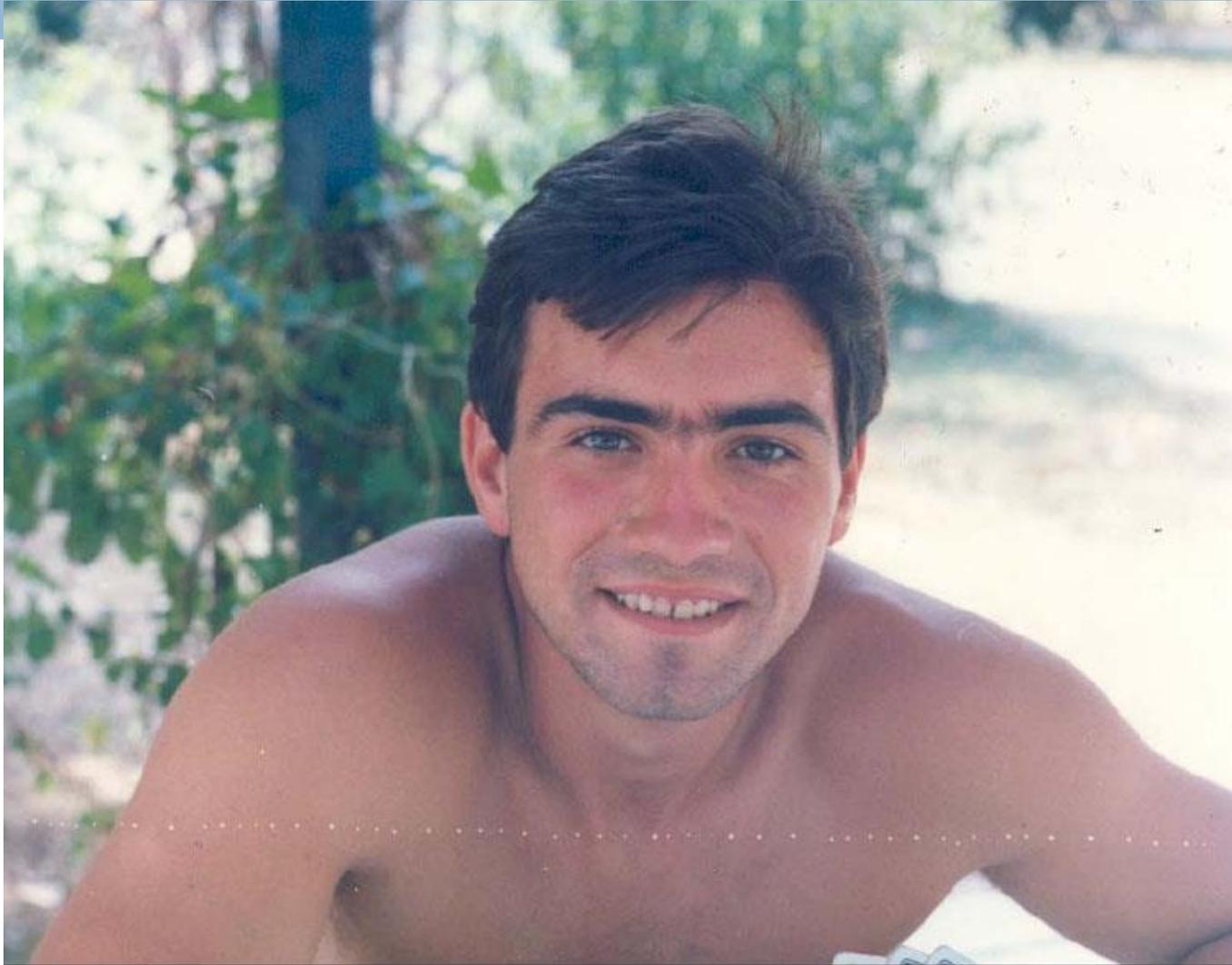
Part of slides from:  
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# Being healthy...

- What's the meaning of it?
- Come on! In the real world!



# Is Nikos healthy?



# Is she healthy?



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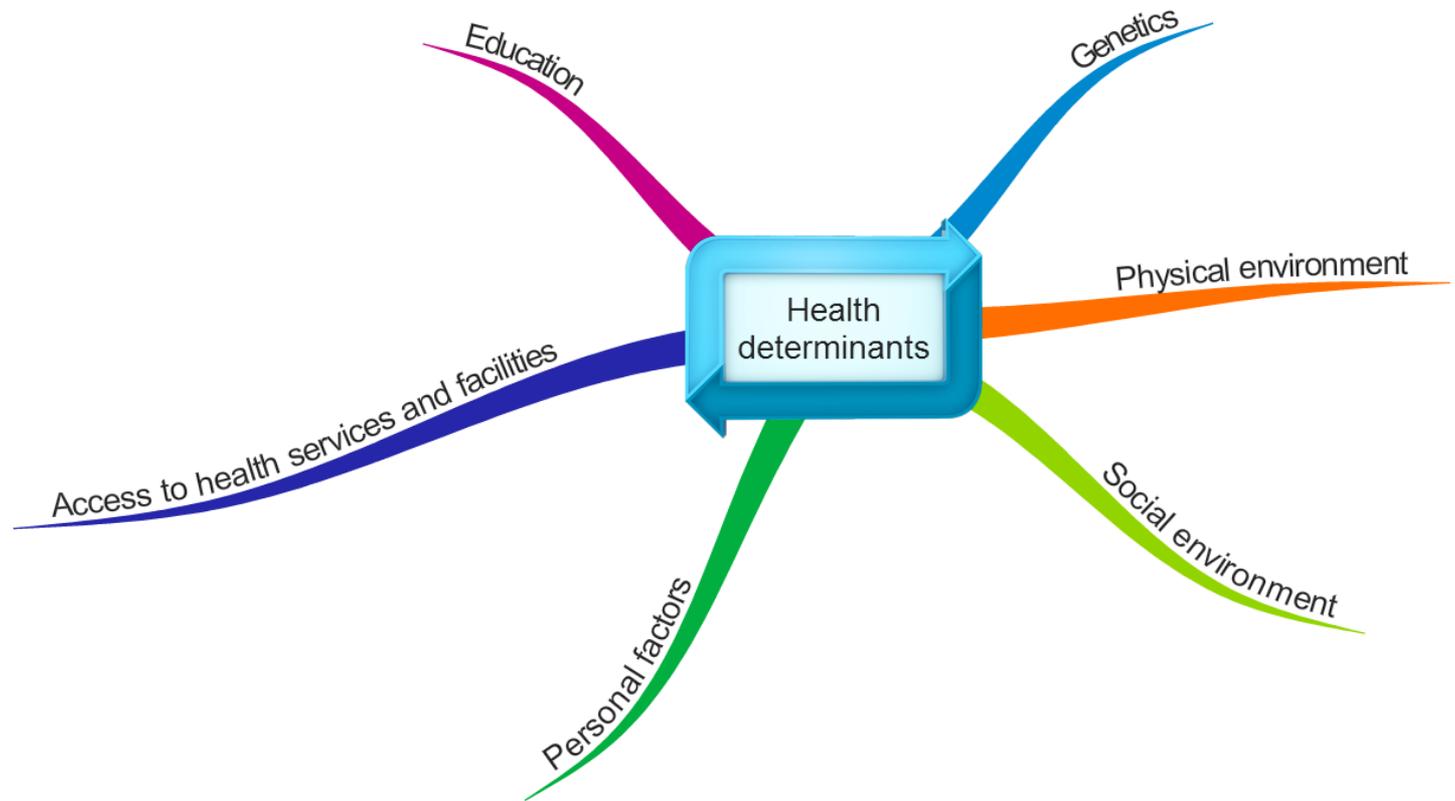
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Is he healthy?



# Is this healthy?





## Determinants of Health

How much control I have over each of the determinants?

# Determinants of health

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- Many factors combined to affect the health of individuals and communities.
- Furthermore, every aspect of human existence either affects or is affected by health.

# Having money means you are healthy or just wealthy?



# What is the relation between income and social status with health?

- Higher income and social status are linked to better health.
- The greater the gap between the richest and poorest people, the greater the differences in health.



Health behaviors explain only moderate part of socioeconomic differences in **mortality**

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**Original Contribution**

June 3, 1998

# Socioeconomic Factors, Health Behaviors, and Mortality

## Results From a Nationally Representative Prospective Study of US Adults

Paula M. Lantz, PhD; James S. House, PhD; James M. Lepkowski, PhD; [et al](#)

**Conclusion.**— Although reducing the prevalence of health risk behaviors in low-income populations is an important public health goal, socioeconomic differences in mortality are due to a wider array of factors and, therefore, would persist even with improved health behaviors among the disadvantaged.

# Environmental vs personal behaviours

- Whether people are healthy or not, is determined largely by situational and environmental factors.
- The context of people's lives determine largely their health, and so **blaming individuals for having poor health or crediting them for good health is inappropriate.**
- Individuals are unlikely to be able to directly control many of the determinants of health.

# These categories overlap and interrelate with each other

- A pregnant woman cancels a needed appointment for prenatal care because she cannot afford to miss a half-day's salary
- Kids would like to buy healthy snacks but school restaurant doesn't offer them
- One would like to buy low fat products but he can't afford a healthy lifestyle based on his income

# Genetics as health's determinant

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- Much of one's size and configuration, special abilities, disease resistance, and general robustness may be attributable to genetic factors.
- Sometimes our lives are dominated by some specific disease or deficiency.

# Genetics as health's determinant

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- Inheritance plays a role in determining lifespan, healthiness and the likelihood of developing certain illnesses (e.g. heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, e.t.c.)

# What can you do in order to fight with genetics that affect health?

- Protection of gene pool (e.g. environment)
  - ▣ Genetic counseling (blood tests)
  - ▣ Parental diagnosis (amniocentesis, use of ultrasound)
  - ▣ Screening of newborns (food metabolism)

# How much our physical environment can be considered as health's determinant?

- Temperature, humidity, altitude, noise level, presence or absence of various pollutants, exposure to natural and/or artificial radiation all affects health to various degrees.

# Physical environment as health's determinant

- Food & water
  - ▣ Food additives & environmental pollution
  - ▣ Diet
  - ▣ Tobacco
- Air
  - ▣ Air pollution
  - ▣ Carbon monoxide
  - ▣ Acid rain
  - ▣ Ozone
- Unintentional injuries
  - ▣ Accidents a) human behavior, b) vehicles and equipment, c) environment

# How much our social environment can be considered as health's determinant?

- Greater support from families, friends and communities is linked to better health.
- Culture - customs and traditions, and the beliefs of the family and community all affect health.

# A question...

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- To what extent the individual has effective control over behaviour under various degrees of economic and social pressure?

# Theodorakis, Papaioannou, & Karastogianidou (2004).

- Students who reported growing up with **one or no parent** adopted **more unhealthy lifestyle** attitudes and behaviors (smoking, drug use, violence, exercise, nutrition) than students growing up with both parents.
- The findings suggest that **family structure is related to students' healthy or unhealthy lifestyle** indicating that in health education programs **all members** of the close environment within which children grow **should be involved**, especially for children who do not live with both parents.
- The absence of parents reduces the possibility of students participating in health-related activities and protecting their health.

# Leatherdale et al., (2006)

Non-smoking grade 6 and 7 students are more likely to be susceptible to smoking if they have

- (a) smoking friends,
- (b) a mother who smokes, or
- (c) two or more close friends who smoke and attend a school with a relatively high smoking rate among the grade 8 students.

PEOPLE HAVE BETTER  
SURVIVAL POSSIBILITIES  
AND BETTER QUALITY OF  
LIFE WHEN THEY LIVE IN  
COMMUNITIES INSTEAD OF  
BEING ISOLATED OR NOT  
CONNECTED TO ANYONE



- 
- The networks of our societies, traditions and laws, as well as the activities of social, commercial, and governmental organizations determine political and economic circumstances that profoundly affect each person's quality of life.

# Social environment as health's determinant

(social epidemiology)

The health of a nation depends to a large extent on the social structure of the society.

- Socioeconomic status (income, education, occupation) vs. health (serious illness, patient visits, mortality, disability, infant mortality)
  - ▣ Strong and persistent relationship to health regardless of historical period or cultural setting
- Religion
  - ▣ Healthy habits related with religion? Any ideas?
- What about gender?



“WOMEN GET SICK – MEN DIE”

# Gender

- Men and women suffer from different types of diseases at different ages.



# WHAT ABOUT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND HEALTH?

How much can determine our health?

# Health care

- The quality, availability, and proper use of medical, dental and other health services can have important effects.



# Health care

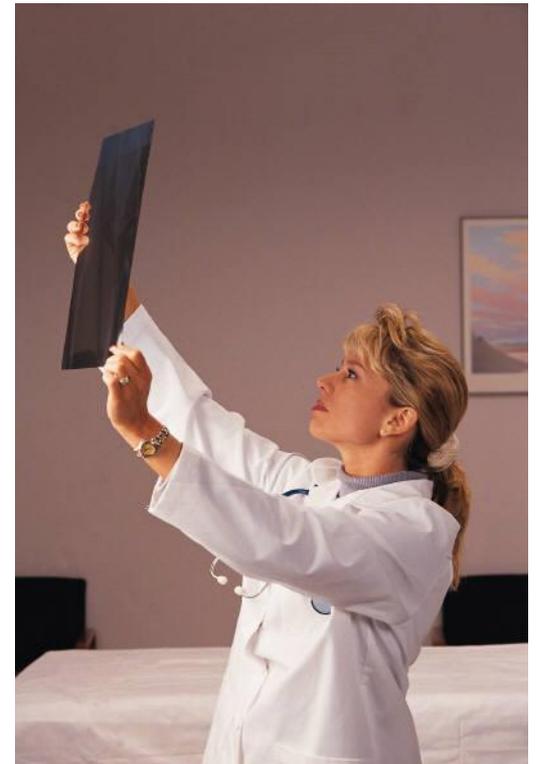
- In many countries, mental health is excluded or neglected from the health care system



# Health care

- Current performance

- Free access and poor health (the gap is still there...)
- High cost
- Poor administrative efficiency
- Unnecessary medical procedures



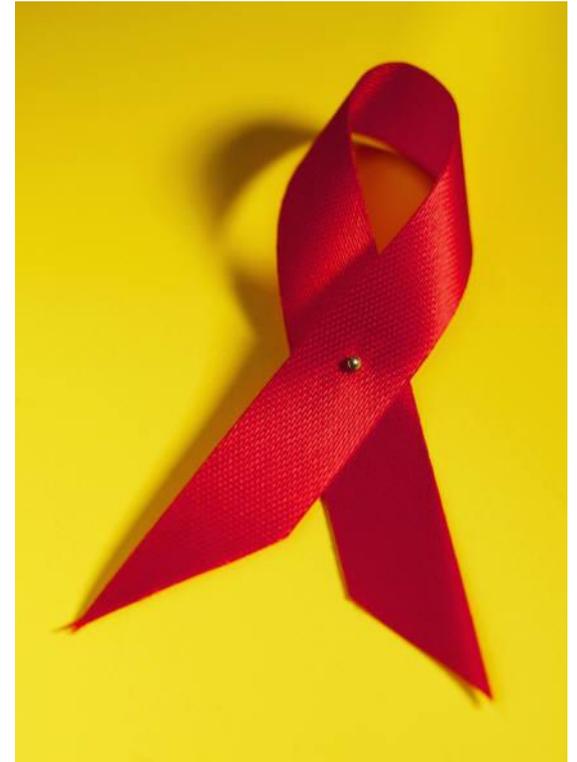
# Health care: Looking back...Why our health has improved the previous century?

- “Health improved not because of steps taken when we are ill but mainly because...
  - ...of specific measures such as vaccination and immunization,
  - ...we become ill less often,
  - ...we have a higher standard of nutrition,
  - ...we live in a healthier environment,
  - ...we have fewer children.”

# One more thing... the most important

- ...we have more knowledge in order to predict illnesses

**Education can make a difference finally!**



# Education as health's determinant

- Low education levels are linked with poor health, more stress and lower self-confidence.





“YOU THE INDIVIDUAL  
CAN DO MORE FOR  
YOUR OWN HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING  
THAN ANY DOCTOR,  
ANY HOSPITAL, ANY  
DRUG ANY EXOTIC  
MEDICAL DEVICE”...





How much I can control my health?



# Personal behaviour as health's determinant

- The choices each person makes in regard to nutrition, exercise, rest, substance use, sexual behavior, and other life-style factors exert a powerful influence on health.

# What is the Role of Behavioural Science and Health Psychology?



# Behavioural Science and Health Psychology are now collaborating...

## Behavioural scientists and health psychologists:

- Aim to develop understanding of biopsychosocial factors involved in (Matarazzo, 1982)
  - promotion and maintenance of health
  - improving healthcare systems and health policy
  - the prevention and treatment of illness
  - the causes of illness (e.g., vulnerability/risk factors)

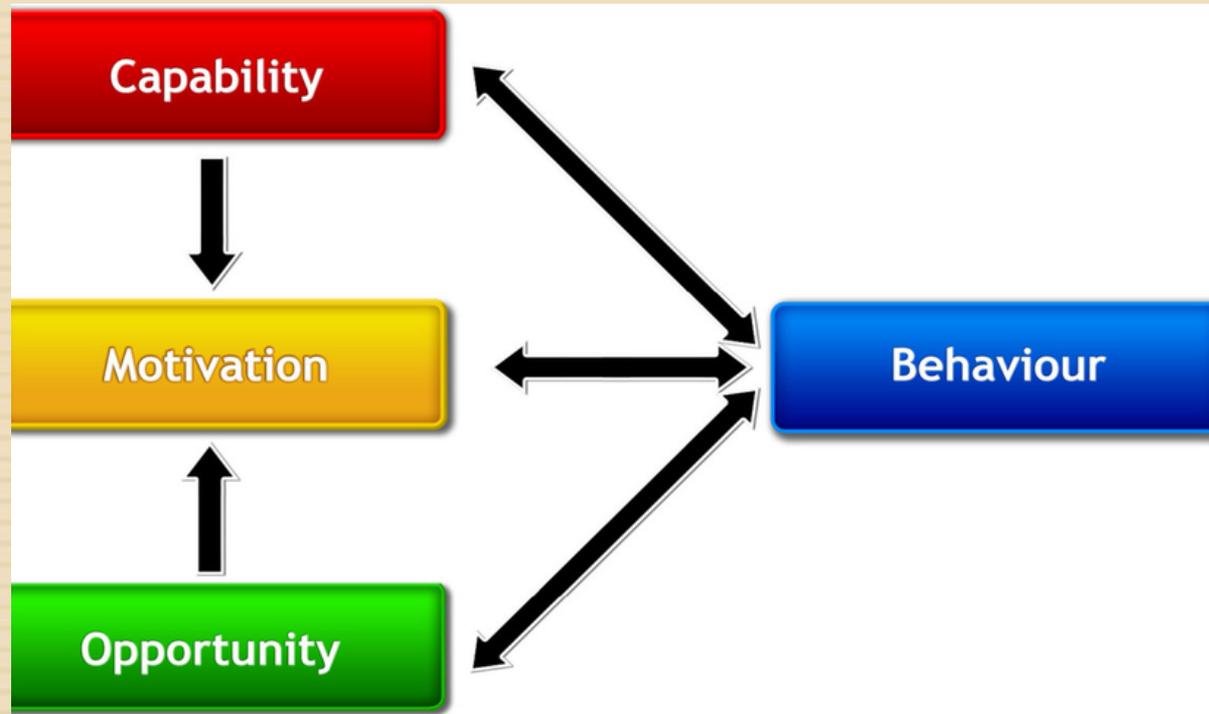
Aim to promote individual and population health through an understanding of behaviour

- Examples:
  - Prevent chronic illness (e.g. liver cirrhosis, CVD)
  - Promote long-term health
  - Increase psychological well-being
  - Quality of life

# Behavioural Science and Health Psychology are now collaborating...

- Specialise in understanding the relationships between psychological factors (e.g. behaviours, attitudes, beliefs) and health and illness.
- Knowledge and skills in the following areas:
  - ▣ Developing and evaluating interventions that can enhance health and wellbeing, including treatments that can help people to cope with illness or associated problems (e.g., facilitating friends and family to help with recovery)
  - ▣ Understanding how psychological and behavioural factors interact with the physical systems of the body and social factors to influence health and illness
  - ▣ Understanding the way that people behave or the underlying attitudes that put their health at risk and how they might change these behaviours to prevent illness and promote health
  - ▣ Identifying and treating the psychological impact of illness.

Source: Australian Psychological Society <http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/chp/>



Determinants of health behavior  
Thinking behaviorally



Thank you

... more tomorrow!