

Analysis of social determinants of health and health inequities
- a multi country event on approaches and policy
12-17 October 2009, Kosice, Slovakia

Abstracts of key-note lectures

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Ethnic differences in health and health behaviour

Differences in health, lifestyles and use of health care between groups of varying ethnic origin can have important implications for preventive and curative care. For a proper targeting of this care, information is needed on the health status of separate ethnic groups and on the mechanisms which lead to a poorer health status for them, if any. Such a poorer health status may firstly be due to an adverse social and economic position of immigrant and ethnic minority groups. Other explanations are poor living conditions, including discrimination, cultural factors like a different perception of health, and biological factors, especially a poorer health status at the moment of migration and racial differences. Especially racial differences are often chosen as an explanation for ethnic health differences without a proper accounting for socioeconomic and cultural differences.

In this lecture, first the concept of ethnicity as well as its measurement will be discussed. A next topic will be the mechanisms that lead to ethnic differences in health, among which socioeconomic differences. Finally, I will provide some examples of studies on ethnic differences from western and central Europe, including the analysis of contributing factors.[189 words]