

Editorial

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Public health involves a wide range of issues and topics, which become more manageable by conceptualizing them in an operationally robust framework for public health practice. This framework consists of three interrelated but distinct key domains of public health practice: health improvement, health protection and health service quality improvement (Orme et al. 2007). This issue of the *Journal of Public Health* contains articles in each of those three domains. Furthermore, contributions are included on methodological aspects of public health research.

The first four articles are related to the domain of health improvement. Alvarez-Galvez et al. compared the effect of different measures of socioeconomic status on self-rated health throughout European welfare state regimes. They found that there is a contextual effect among welfare states that varies the impact of social and economic indicators in self-rated health over time. The link between socioeconomic status and health was also investigated in the study of Vaughn et al., who found an association between dropping out of school and major chronic health conditions. The authors recommend to adopt policies and practices that reduce dropout from school. The high number of road traffic casualties among young people remains a worrying public health problem in many countries. In the UK, Jones and Thomas used police road traffic casualty data from 2008 to 2010 to describe the circumstances in which 15- to 19-year-old vehicle occupants are injured in road traffic crashes compared with older casualties. The main identified risk factors were travelling with occupants of a similar age or between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The authors plead for the implementation of a Graduated Driver Licensing to tackle these risk factors. Larsson et al. conducted

an exploratory study to investigate determinants of employee health in Swedish municipal social care organizations. The results suggest that the provision of individual- and organization-directed health-specific measures was related to employee health.

In the domain of health protection, a first article, authored by Bekkerman and Morgan, investigated the effects of exposure to coal power plant emissions on school absenteeism for children with asthma. Exposure to higher emission volumes appeared to increase the risk of missing a school day and thus affected access to education for children with asthma. In a study in India, Prabhakaran et al. showed that risk factors for leptospirosis differed in rural and urban settings. They conclude that identification and understanding of the potential risk factors in different environments is important to help to identify the source of the contamination. Arsenic contamination of drinking water is a serious public health problem in Bangladesh. Hossain and Inauen combined qualitative research with two surveys to compare stakeholders' and end users' preferences concerning arsenic mitigation. Stakeholders' and end users' preferences only partially converged.

Also articles on health services research are included in this issue of the *Journal of Public Health*. Rissbacher et al. carried out an interventionist study to explore the reasons for and advantages of the introduction of mandatory cash flow statements for hospitals in Austria. They found that cash flow statements deliver objective and transparent information on the operating performance as well as the investment and financing behavior. The relationship between the use of maternal health care services and the frequency of reproductive health complications in Assam, India, was studied by Gogoi et al. The study reaches the conclusion that use of intensive health care services reduces health complications. The importance of community awareness of maternal health to motivate women to use more antenatal care services is emphasized. Goto et al. examined the factors affecting regional variations

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in hospitalization expenditures of elderly residents in Japan. The significance and magnitude of associations were observed to vary according to different levels of urbanization, which made the authors conclude that policies designed to contain health care expenditure should take regional characteristics and levels of urbanization into account.

Three articles are about methodological topics. Van der Heyden et al. evaluated the reliability and validity of a global question on self-reported chronic morbidity in health interview surveys. Self-reported chronic morbidity, measured by one global question, appears to be a reliable instrument to measure ill health. This indicator also takes into account the relevance of chronic disease for the people themselves. The validity of self-reported BMI in older adults was investigated by Vuksanovic et al. The authors found that self-reports result in an under-reporting of weight and an over-reporting of height, and they proposed a correction to remove the average bias and improve accuracy. Selective participation in studies is an important problem. Kibler et al. assessed five potential

predictors of participation in an actual study of psychological stress and health among African Americans. The study showed that investigators might enhance enrollment of African American adults by ameliorating health-related fears, increasing accessibility or communicating benefits of the research.

The current issue of the *Journal of Public Health* includes many interesting articles, which add up to a well-balanced journal volume with new scientific information on a wide variety of public health topics. Studies are presented from the US, three Asian and six European countries, which clearly illustrates the international character of the journal.

References

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