Seeing the Big Picture

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ACP/AM Edwards Lecture
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The Art of Medicine: Healing and the Limits of Technology

Herbert Ho Ping Kong
(1) To understand why it is essential for physicians to address the social determinants of health
(2) To identify reasons why physicians often avoid dealing with the social determinants of health
(3) To find creative ways to address social determinants of health and improve health in our communities
Social Determinants of Health

The primary factors that shape health (and health inequities) are not medical treatments or lifestyle choices, but living conditions that are imposed by social structures.

Social Determinants of Health

(1) Income and Wealth Distribution
(2) Early Childhood Development
(3) Education
(4) Employment
(5) Stress and Control
(6) Food
(7) Housing
(8) Social Exclusion

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<th>Education</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Completed university</td>
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<td>8.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
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<td>20.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed secondary</td>
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<td>Less than secondary</td>
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<td>26.5</td>
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<td>18.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
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<td>Manual</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>24.7</td>
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Childhood Obesity

Tremblay and Willms, Int J Obesity 2003

Adj. Odds Ratio

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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Life Expectancy in Canada

Hwang et al. BMJ 2009
Why do physicians often avoid dealing with the social determinants of health?

1. No Point
   (It’s hopeless)
According to repeated nationwide surveys,

More Doctors Smoke CAMELS
than any other cigarette!

Doctors in every branch of medicine were asked, "What cigarette do you smoke?"
The brand named most was Camel!

You'll enjoy Camels for the same reasons so many doctors enjoy them. Camels have cool, cool mildness, pack after pack, and a flavor unmatched by any other cigarette.

Make this sensible test: Smoke only Camels for 30 days and see how well Camels please your taste, how well they suit your throat as your steady smoke. You'll see how enjoyable a cigarette can be!

THE DOCTORS' CHOICE IS AMERICA'S CHOICE!
Why do physicians often avoid dealing with the social determinants of health?

2. No power
(I have no influence)
Most Trusted Professions

(1) Firefighters 88%
(2) EMTs 85%
(3) Pharmacists 83%
(4) Nurses 82%
(5) Doctors 81%
(6) Airline pilots 79%
(7) Dentists 71%
(8) Teachers 68%
(9) Armed forces 66%
(10) Veterinarians 66%
In this chart, the income distribution of Canadians is represented. The median annual income is $31,000. The x-axis shows the annual income categories (in thousands of dollars) ranging from less than 5 to over 200. The y-axis represents the percentage (%).
Why do physicians often avoid dealing with the social determinants of health?

3. No time (I am too busy)
How can we find creative ways to address social determinants of health and improve health in our communities?
1. Find a Problem

Look for the “causes of the causes”
2. Find Your Passion
3. Find the Evidence
4. Find Your Resources
5. Find Your Allies
I JUST GOT A $200,000 TAX CUT... I LOVE THIS COUNTRY! ...BUT WHY IS IT SUCH A DUMP?!