Healthy Ireland: Addressing Health Inequalities

Diarmuid O’Donovan
Director of Public Health, HSE West
Senior Lecturer, Social & Preventive Medicine, NUIG
• Determinants of Health

• Health Inequality in Ireland
  – socio-economic dimensions of health differentials

• Ireland’s response to improving health and wellbeing of the population
Why treat people...

then send them back
to the conditions that made them sick?
What is health?
England 1855-1964: Decennial Death Rates From Respiratory Tuberculosis
What do we need to be healthy?
Determinants of Health
(Adapted from Dalghren and Whitehead, 1991 and Grant and Barton, 2006)
Health inequality… Health inequity

• A difference in which disadvantaged social groups systematically experience worse health or greater health risks than more advantaged social groups

  Braveman 2006

• Differences in health that are not only unnecessary and avoidable but, in addition, are considered unfair and unjust

  Whitehead 1990
Deprivation ranking in quintiles of Electoral Divisions, Republic of Ireland, 2010

Change in deprivation rate Ireland 2004-2010

Deprivation rate for individuals living in households with/without children by year

Socioeconomic gradient in health

• Many studies have documented a socioeconomic gradient in mortality, morbidity, perceived or self reported health and lifestyle factors:
  – Unemployment, low income poor housing
  – More than double the death rate in the lowest SEG compared to the highest SEG for most diseases
  – Marked differences for some conditions: mental and behavioural disorders, diseases of the respiratory system, and diseases of the digestive system.
  – Significant difference in the social distribution of a range of cancers
Socioeconomic gradient in health

- Chronic illness is more prevalent in the unskilled manual workers and for those with lower incomes
- People in income poverty are less likely to report their health as good or very good health
- Evidence of social class differences in risk factors such as BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure.
- Social gradients in smoking, physical activity, dietary intake, alcohol use
Life Expectancy by Social Class, Republic of Ireland, 2010

Deviation of life expectancy at birth from average life expectancy by deprivation ranking

Health Inequalities: Heart Attack and Angina

Population prevalence rates of angina and heart attack amongst adults across the deprivation bands in the Republic of Ireland within each sex and age group, 2007

Healthy Ireland
A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025

Vision: where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility.
Healthy Ireland Goals

• Goal 1: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life

• **Goal 2: Reduce health inequalities**

• Goal 3: Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing

• Goal 4: Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland
Framework of Actions

• Governance and Policy
• Partnerships and Cross-Sectoral Working
• Empowering People and Communities
• Health and Health Reform
• Research and Evidence
• Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation
Participation

- Work with Social Inclusion Unit
- Local health partners will work with local authorities
- Prioritise community based programmes for those most at risk
- Support and link existing partnerships
Healthy Ireland: Priority Areas for Implementation

- Research Plan and Outcomes Framework
- Healthy Ireland Council
- Positive Ageing Strategy
- Substance Misuse policy
- Tobacco Free Ireland

- Physical Activity
- Dementia Strategy
- Early Years Strategy
Key enablers

– Fit for purpose Health & Wellbeing Division
– Evidence and building a ‘Knowledge Management’ function & capacity
– Strategic Communications: patient and population empowerment
– Partnership and strengthen frameworks and infrastructure for delivery

Setting the groundwork for sustained engagement and community mobilisation on this issue and for increased investment in health improvement for all
Socioeconomic gradient in health

- **References**
- All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team UCD, Our Geels, All Ireland Traveller Health Study – Summary of Findings DOHC, 2010
- *EU-SILC EuroStat in Dept. of Health and Children, Health in Ireland Key Trends 2011*
- *CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions Preliminary Results 2010*
- *EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2009, in Health in Ireland key trends 2011, DOHC*