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Poor people die younger than Rich people!

*Nicolas Baverez, Martin Hirsch, Silvia Stringhini
Moderator: Brice Gayet*

1. The existence of a socio-economic gradient in terms of life expectancy

There is no threshold for distinguishing between the poor in bad health and the rich in good health. However, as in many areas, there is a socio-economic gradient. In other words, the fact of being a bit richer means a lightly better level of health. While life expectancy overall is constantly increasing, the gap between rich and poor remains. According to some researchers, 50% of this inequality can be explained by individual behaviour. If communication campaigns are to be carried out to promote good practices (food, physical exercise, etc.), they need people to take an active stance to put them into practice.

2. France, a country with low inequality of terms of income, but high inequality in terms of health

France is distinctive in that it has not seen income inequalities increase over the past 20 years. It has an efficient health system, but significant health inequalities. These inequalities are both socio-economic and geographic. France therefore faces a specific problem linked to health inequalities. These can be made worse by financial difficulties of certain sectors, as well as by the existence of medical wastelands. This factor in inequality is cultural, since the poorest populations are those with the greatest distrust – and therefore the greatest isolation – towards the establishment.

3. Prescribe education, not medicines!

The socio-economic gradient applies in France and in the rest of the world. Populations in better health and with the highest life expectancy are those that are better educated before being richer. Measures taken to combat absenteeism from school will eventually have a positive impact on health and life expectancy.

4. The poor suffer from being a minority

Fortunately, the poor are a minority in our societies. Consequently, politicians see measures targeting poor populations as the best way to lose elections. Progressive measures must therefore be initiated to remove these threshold effects.

5. On the whole, a multifactorial phenomenon

The socio-cultural gradient can be explained by behaviours, i.e. eating habits, sports practices, and tobacco and alcohol consumption. None of these elements takes precedence over the others. Other behavioural factors to be taken into account are: stress (in particular at work), sleep, etc. Lastly, genetic factors explain some of the inequalities, but according to many researchers, 75% are down to lifestyle.

6. Take decisive action, as early as possible

To reduce health inequalities, society must take decisive action. In addition to education, the system as a whole must be inclusive and ensure that the poorest populations can benefit from innovations. For example, social tariffs in school canteens enable children from the poorest levels of society to have a balanced diet. Childhood obesity is a reliable indicator of social inequality. To combat these health inequalities, the authorities must take action from childhood.