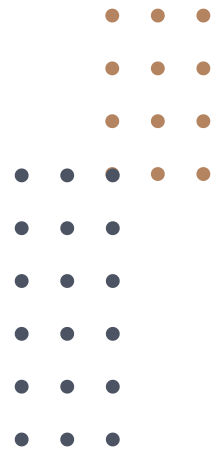




香港中文大學
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



CUHK INSTITUTE OF HEALTH EQUITY
香港中文大學健康公平研究所



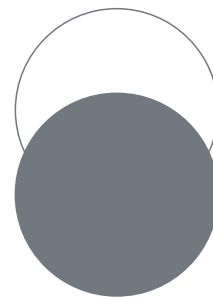
ANNUAL REPORT



2022-2023

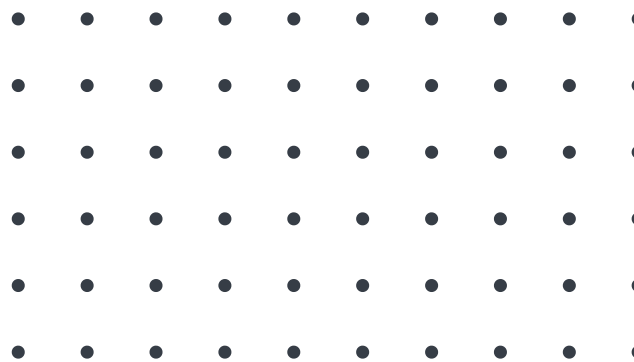
**CUHK
INSTITUTE
OF HEALTH
EQUITY**

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Reporting period: 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023



The Institute

The CUHK Institute of Health Equity is established in January 2020



The CUHK Institute of Health Equity is established in January 2020 with Prof. Jean Woo, Prof. Sir Michael Marmot and Prof. Eng-kiong Yeoh as Co-directors. The University College London Institute of Health Equity is the collaborative partner of the Institute.

Vision

The Institute aspires to establish CUHK as a leading institution in promoting health equity studies in the Asian region.

Mission

The Institute endeavours to examine and understand issues of health equity in Hong Kong, inform government policies and intervention programmes to improve health equity of Hong Kong, and establish a network for the Asian region.

Logo

The two intertwining rings symbolizes intersectionality of different social factors that interconnect with each other, while the transitional gradient of color of the two rings represents the socioeconomic gradient in health, which is a central concept to understanding and achieving health equity.



CUHK INSTITUTE OF HEALTH EQUITY
香港中文大學健康公平研究所

Social Media Platforms



Steering Committee

Chairman: Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Research (*ex officio*)
Professor Mai Har Sham

Members: Dean, Faculty of Medicine (*ex officio*)
Professor Francis K.L. Chan

Dean, Faculty of Social Science (*ex officio*)
Professor Chi-yue Chiu

Co-Directors, CUHK Institute of Health Equity (*ex officio*)
Professor Jean Woo
Professor Eng-kiong Yeoh

Secretary: Functional Manager, CUHK Institute of Health Equity (*ex officio*)
Mr. Wai-tong Richard Lee

Executive Committee

The Institute has established an Executive Committee to oversee the administration of activities and affairs of the Institute.

Directorship and Affiliated Members

Co-directors

Prof. Jean Woo Prof. Sir Michael Marmot Prof. Eng-kiong Yeoh

Associate Directors

Prof. Hung Wong Prof. Roger Chung

Affiliated Members

Prof. Samuel Wong Dr. Ning Fan

Overview of our work

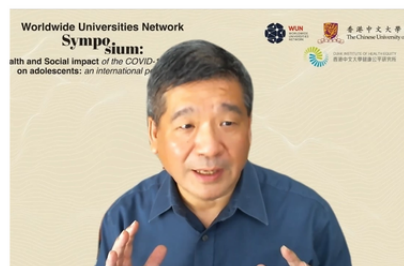
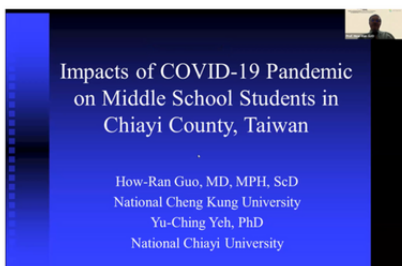


To establish CUHK as
a leading institution
in promoting health
equity studies in the
Asian region



RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Public education activities have resumed to face-to-face mode or hybrid mode after the pandemic has subsided. Inequalities on adolescent mental health, ageing and role of organisations to mitigate inequalities were topics highlighted in this year's work.



Based on the findings of the cross-country research on the health of adolescents, the Institute has held a symposium in November 2022 in which academics and experts shared their insights on how the pandemic and its containment measures have disproportionately affected adolescents and how the impact can be mitigated.



A seminar was conducted later on to discuss how the findings on the importance of resilience to mental health can be applied in school setting and in the wider community. Speakers and audience include school teachers, NGOs, academics and students.



On ageing front, a UQ-CUHK Health Equity Webinar was held in July 2023 to examine and discuss the healthcare systems in both areas, assess their effectiveness and influence on various aspects of healthy aging ranging from promoting healthy lifestyles to comprehending the motivational factors involved in the frailty prevention program. A talk entitled “Live Well and Die Well” was given to secondary school students on end-of-life care related issues with a health equity perspective in June 2023.



Efforts have been made to pinpoint how firms and organisations can contribute to mitigating health inequalities. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, a session “Adding Health to ESG: How Businesses Can Impact Health Equity” was held in the Asia Summit on Global Health in November 2022. The session included a dialogue between Sir Michael Marmot and Professor Rocky Tuan, Vice-Chancellor and President of CUHK which has inspired the participants joining the Summit.



In the same month, a distinguished lecture entitled “Social Justice and Health Equity” by Prof. Michael Marmot deliberated the health inequalities faced by Hong Kong people and how the business sector could improve health equity. Apart from understanding the situation, it is more important to take action to reduce health inequalities as a matter of social justice.



The blog set up by the Institute continued to serve as a platform to share viewpoints on different topics through the lens of health equity and to spark interest of the public and stimulate discussions. The topics addressed crucial areas such as roadmap for addressing population aging in Hong Kong, gender equity, evaluation of the effectiveness of pandemic policies in relation to public health, as well as the relationship between housing and health.



Hong Kong Needs a Roadmap for Population Ageing

By Eric Lai

Emergency rooms of public hospitals in Hong Kong are typically swamped with patients durin...

[Read More](#)



Hong Kong Population Needs Improved Housing and Better Health

By Gary Chung and Richard Lee

Poor housing worsens both physical and mental health, especially for the socially...

[Read More](#)



The Call for a Gender-equitable Society in the International Day of Older Persons

By Anson Chau and Richard Lee

'Resilience and Contributions of Older Women' – the theme of this year's International Day of...

[Read More](#)



Are COVID 19 Pandemic Policies Good for Public Health

By Jean Woo

The answer posed by the title of this article may seem obvious: that pandemic policies are...

[Read More](#)

CAPACITY BUILDING

In April 2023, the Institute has delivered a talk and discussion session to frontline workers from different areas of work in the HKAKA, a key NGO in Southern district and operator of the District Health Centre in the district. Discussions include linkages of health outcomes of older adults with social and environmental factors, the important role of community service providers to enhance the well-being of older adults, as well as evaluations of community programmes through assessing the improvement of health outcomes.

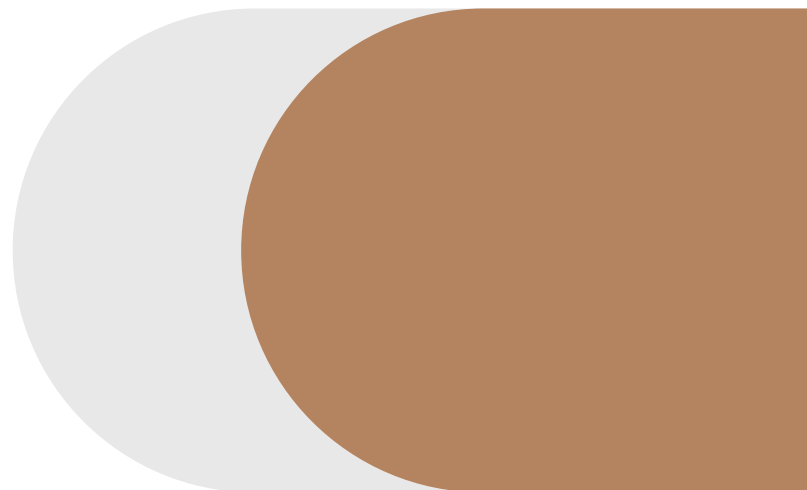


Various talks to about 450 students from different tertiary institutions were held throughout the year to introduce a perspective of health equity to stimulate their thinking among their academic disciplines.



ASSESS HEALTH EQUITY AND IDENTIFY SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Following the first health equity report, the Institute has published the second report entitled “Health Inequalities In Hong Kong: A Life Course Approach” in December 2022. The report examines how different social conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age affect the health of a person at critical periods and cumulatively over time in Hong Kong, with highlights on the alarming mental health situation among adolescents and the vulnerable situation and ill health faced by low-skilled workers.



Articles

Secular trends of life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy at age 65 and associated gender and area-level socioeconomic inequalities in Hong Kong: a serial cross-sectional study between 2007 and 2020

Gary Ki-Chang,^{1,2} Michael Mannet,³ Irene Yuk-Ying Ho,⁴ Si-Ming Chan,⁵ Erik Tze-Chun Li,⁶ Samuel Young Shan Wang,⁷ Eng-King Yau,^{8,9} Juan Wu,¹⁰ and Roger Yat-Niok Chung^{11,*}

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⁶CUHK Institute of Aging, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

⁷CUHK Centre for Bioethics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Summary Despite Hong Kong's world leading longevity, little is known about its associated disability burden and social patterning. Hence, this study assessed the gender-specific secular trends and area-level inequalities in life expectancy (LE) and disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) at age 65 in Hong Kong.

Methods Population structure, death records, and disability data in 2007, 2013, and 2020 were retrieved from the Census and Statistics Department to estimate LE and DFLE using the Sullivan Method. District-based sociodemographic indicators were used to compare LE and DFLE across 18 districts of Hong Kong in 2013.

Findings Between 2007 and 2020, LE at age 65 increased by 3.7 years (from 18.3 to 22.0) in men and by 2.1 years (from 22.7 to 24.8) in women. By contrast, DFLE increased more slowly, by 1.8 years (from 14.6 to 16.3) in men and by only 0.1 year (from 16.4 to 16.5) in women, leading to a substantial increase in proportion of life spent with disability. Results from multiple linear regression using district-based data in 2013 showed a similar extent of associations of education with LE and DFLE (mean year difference: 0.81 [95% CI: 0.14, 1.48] and 0.68 [0.10, 1.27], respectively, per 10% increase in average education level), while female gender was more strongly associated with LE (4.44 [3.56, 5.31]) than with DFLE (2.00 [1.38, 2.82]).

Interpretation Expansion of disability burden and male-female health-survival paradox hold true in Hong Kong. Unlike Western countries with a stronger socioeconomic patterning of DFLE, the extent of area-level socioeconomic inequalities in LE and DFLE appears to be more comparable in Hong Kong.

Funding Health and Medical Research Fund (Ref. no.: 19202031) by the Health Bureau of Hong Kong.

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Keywords: Life expectancy; Disability-free life expectancy; Trend; Gender; Socioeconomic factor; Inequality; Older adults; Hong Kong

Introduction Since the first decade of the 21st century, Hong Kong has overtaken Japan to lead the world in life expectancy (LE) at birth, with 88.1 years for women and 82.2 years

for men in 2019.¹ As a result of the post-war industrialization and rapid socioeconomic development, improvement of nutrition, advances in technology and medicine, and enhanced maternal and child healthcare,

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¹Original article: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanrhc.2023.100999>

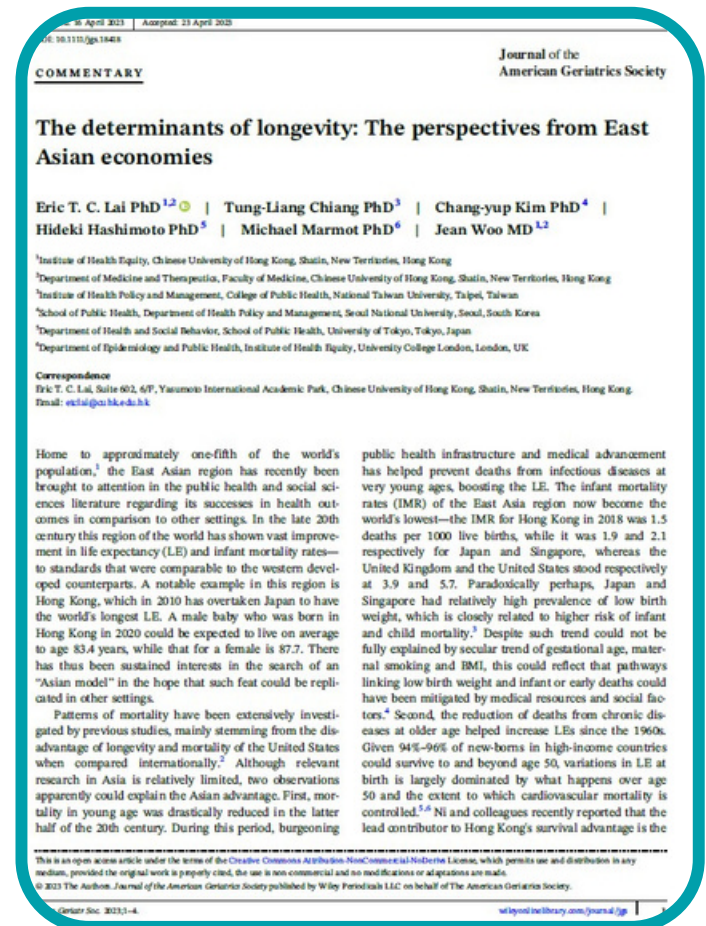
²Corresponding author. Room 412, JC School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.

³Email address: rychn@hk.hku.edu.hk (R.Y.N. Chung).

⁴Lancet.com 361 (6) December 2023

Capitalizing on the Health and Medical Research Fund, the Institute's research team has unearthed patterns of life expectancies of Hong Kong population. Research findings revealed that for people aged 65 in Hong Kong, most of the life expectancy gained between 2007 and 2020 were spent with disability, especially for women, and the proportion of disability-free life has been dropping considerably. The substantial increase in proportion of life spent with disability would lead to expansion of disability burden of the Hong Kong population. Moreover, there is clear socioeconomic gradients on district level with average increases of 0.81 year for life expectancy and 0.68 year for disability-free life expectancy per 10% increase in proportion of older adults attaining secondary education or above across districts. These results highlighted the inadequacies of current efforts to address the underlying social determinants of health with an equity focus, and called for urgent need for comprehensive policy approaches to promoting healthy aging for all in Hong Kong. Details can be found in the article "Secular trends of life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy at age 65 and associated gender and area-level socioeconomic inequalities in Hong Kong: a serial cross-sectional study between 2007 and 2020" published in The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific.

We recently noted in a commentary that there is a longevity advantage in the East Asian societies, with the life expectancies being comparable to their western counterparts. Such recent phenomenon could be attributed to some combinations of successful public health infrastructure that prevents premature deaths at younger age from infectious diseases, effective treatment of cardiovascular diseases and reduction in tobacco smoking. We further hypothesized in the commentary that this could be due to the urban features. Our findings showed that even when compared cities around the world with comparable degree of urbanization and living standard, Hong Kong still showed a longevity advantage, suggesting that several social and environmental forces could be at play in addition to medical advancement – e.g. compact urban planning that facilitate access to necessary services in the vicinity and social connection between older people. This study points to the importance of future research in social determinants of longevity in the face of a rapidly ageing world.



PUBLICATION AND AWARDS

The article “Differential impacts of multimorbidity on COVID-19 severity across the socioeconomic ladder in Hong Kong: a syndemic perspective” published by the Institute won the Outstanding Paper Award for the 2021-2022 Hong Kong Studies Annual Conference organized by the Academy of Hong Kong Studies. Using a health equity perspective and led by a cross-disciplinary research team, the paper uses a “syndemic” perspective to understand a public health issue in a holistic approach via the social determinants of health rather than in silos. The effective use of multiple data sources to conduct COVID-19 research under severe fragmentation of health and social data in Hong Kong is highly valued by the organizer.



Professor Sir Michael Marmot was awarded honorary Doctor of Science by the Chinese University of Hong Kong for his significant contributions to the field of public health and his dedication to addressing social injustice in the distribution of health.



In the reporting period, the Institute has published 12 articles to enhance the understanding of health inequalities in Hong Kong and other countries.

Chan, S. M., Chung, G. K., Kwan, M. H., & Woo, J. (2022). Mitigating inequalities in community care needs of older adults with dementia: a qualitative case study of an integrated model of community care operated under the proportionate universalism principle. *BMC primary care*, 23(1), 244. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12875-022-01855-z>

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Lai, E. T. C., Chau, P. H., Cheung, K., Kwan, M., Lau, K., & Woo, J. (2023). Perception of extreme hot weather and the corresponding adaptations among older adults and service providers-A qualitative study in Hong Kong. *Frontiers in public health*, 11, 1056800. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1056800>

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