Community Pediatrics:

Navigating the Intersection of Medicine, Public Health and Social Determinants of Children's Health

Presented by:

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Definition

The practice of promoting the salutary and integrating the salutary and threatening social, cultural and environmental influences on children's health and development within a community.

Community Pediatrics Includes:

- Expanded focus beyond each child to all children
- Health and development affected by family, educational, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental and political forces
- Synthesis of clinical practice and public health principles – children's health in context of family, school and community
- Collaboration with community partners to provide services and conditions equitably

Exemplars

- Infant mortality
- Preventable infectious diseases
- Dental caries
- Sedentary lifestyles
- Chronic conditions
- Obesity/Metabolic syndrome
- Other historically adult-onset diseases
- Injuries – intentional and unintentional
- Violence
- Exposure to environmental toxicants
- Substance abuse and mental health conditions
- Poverty

Social Determinants of Health

- Life Course Perspective and Early Programming
- Epigenetics
- Childhood obesity and adult cardiovascular disease
- Inadequate calcium and Vitamin D intake in childhood and adult osteoporosis
- Childhood maltreatment and adult mental and physical health problems – e.g. depression, high C-reactive protein, inflammation and heart disease
- Health care but one of several key influences on children's health and well-being as children move through other primary systems, services and environments.

Inequities in Health Status

- England has abolished inequalities in access to healthcare.
- Still they have gross inequalities in health
- Reason: most arise from social inequalities, how they live.
- What good does it do to treat people's illnesses and send them back to conditions that made them sick?!

Unequal Life Expectancy

- 7 year difference between 5th% and 95% on social gradient
- 17 year difference in London borough of Westminster
- 32 year difference in Chicago

Essential Foundations for Healthy Development

- Fostering healthy relationships in the lives of children (raising social capital)
- Promoting high quality learning environments and health literacy (raising educational capital)
- Promoting shared prosperity and financial stability for all members of the community (raising economic capital)
- Promoting healthy environments and supportive infrastructure (raising environmental capital)

Environments

- Toxic exposures:
  - e.g. mold, heavy metals, fluorocarbons
- Unsafe housing
- Limited play and green spaces
- Limited convenient and affordable public transportation
- Access for children with special needs

All Needs are Equally Important

- Physical needs will not be met without education, play, respect and freedom from discrimination

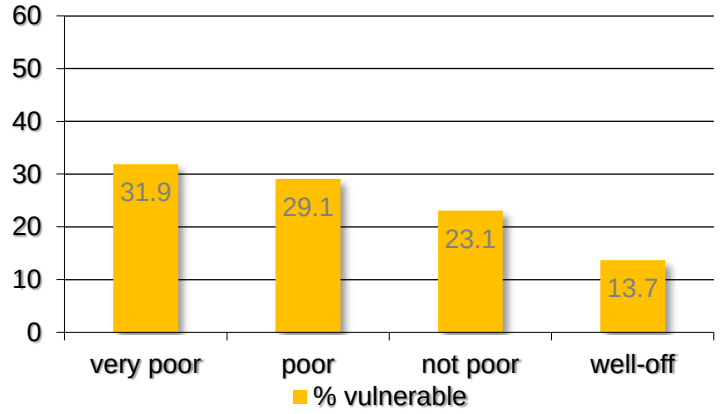
- Children's needs are interdependent

Income Inequality

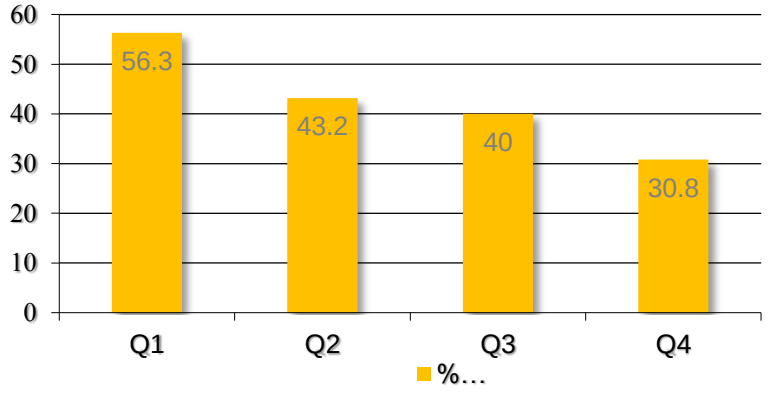
- Proxy for more profound inequalities that create unequal sense of worth, efficacy
- Income matters more when other primary supports are not equitably provided
  - Healthcare, education, childcare, transportation, workplace environment and security, collective efficacy and social cohesion (epidemiology of depression and smoking)

Percent vulnerable children and SES

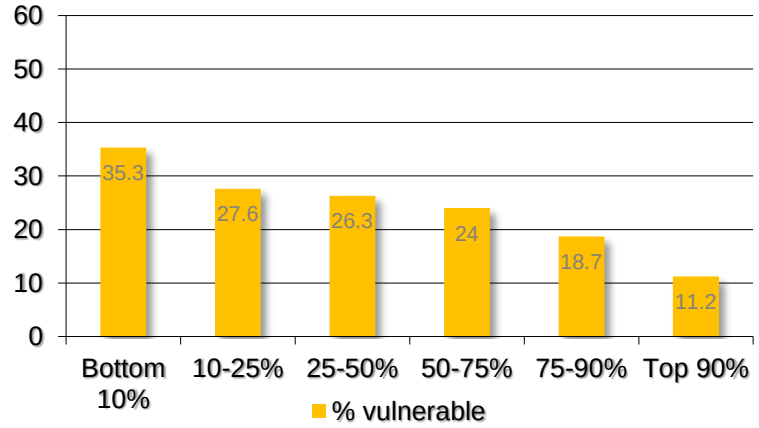
Canada



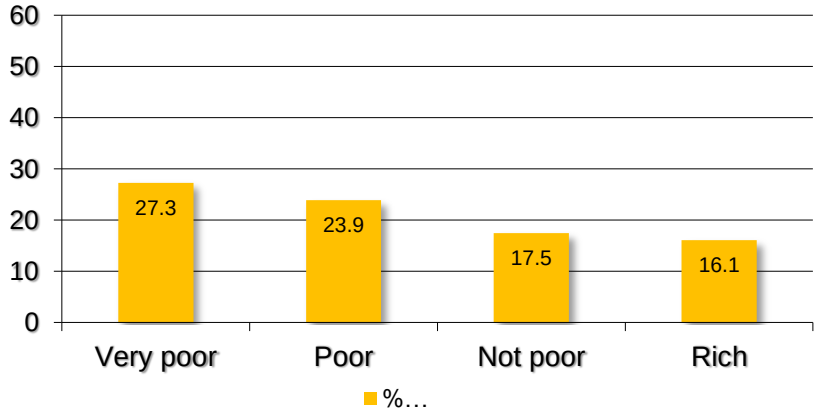
Kosovo



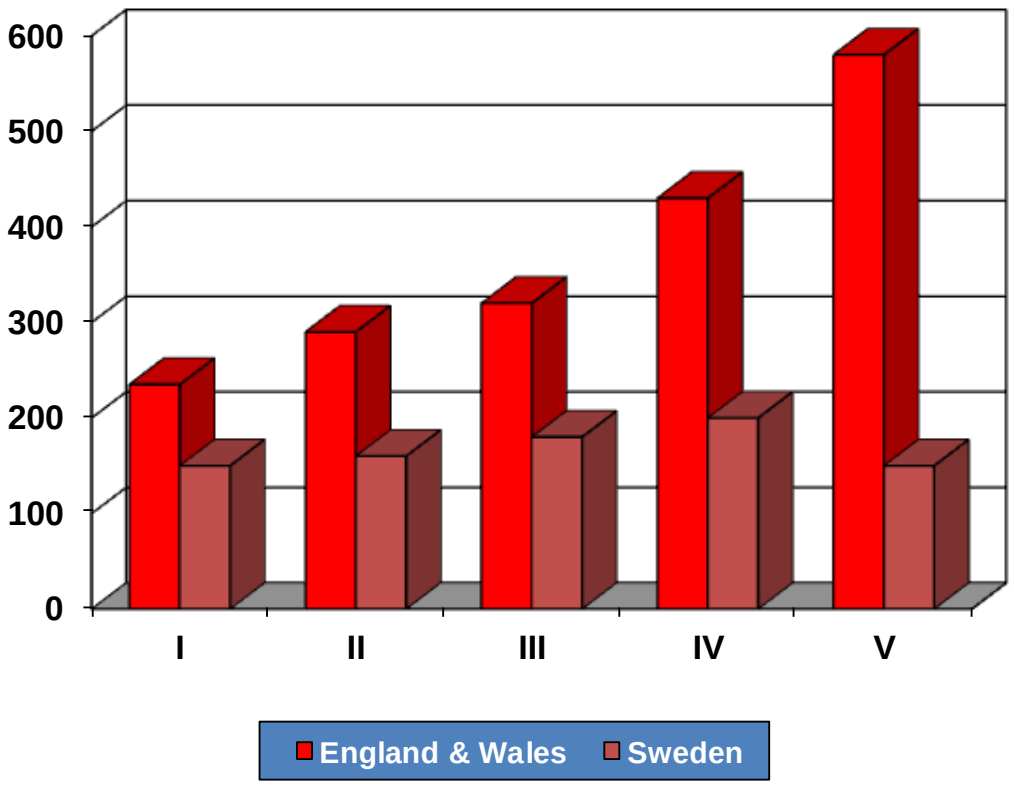
Australia



Mexico



Post-neonatal Infant Mortality
(per 100,000 live births,1986)



Wilkinson RG. Income distribution and life expectancy. BMJ. 1992;304:165-168

The Children's Trust

Psychophysiological Mechanism

- Low self-control, self-efficacy and self-esteem together cause a cascade of toxic stress that destroys brain receptors, ability to fight infection, inflammation and increase all-cause mortality.

- Mental health is root of physical health

- Social justice affects mental health

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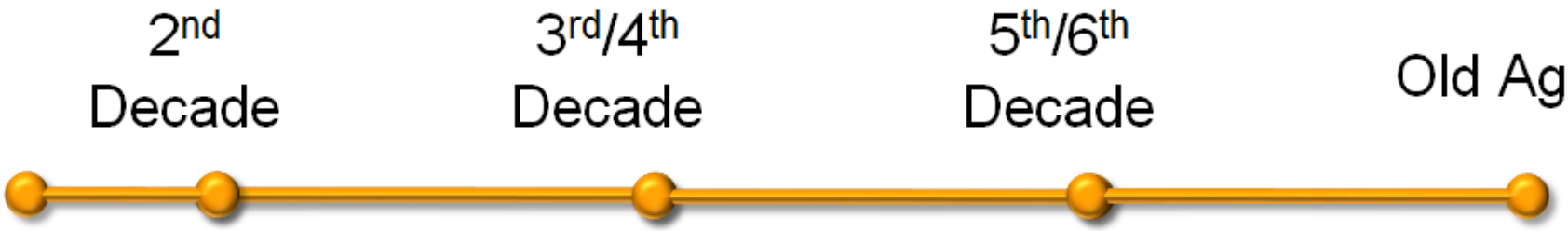
I matter

I belong

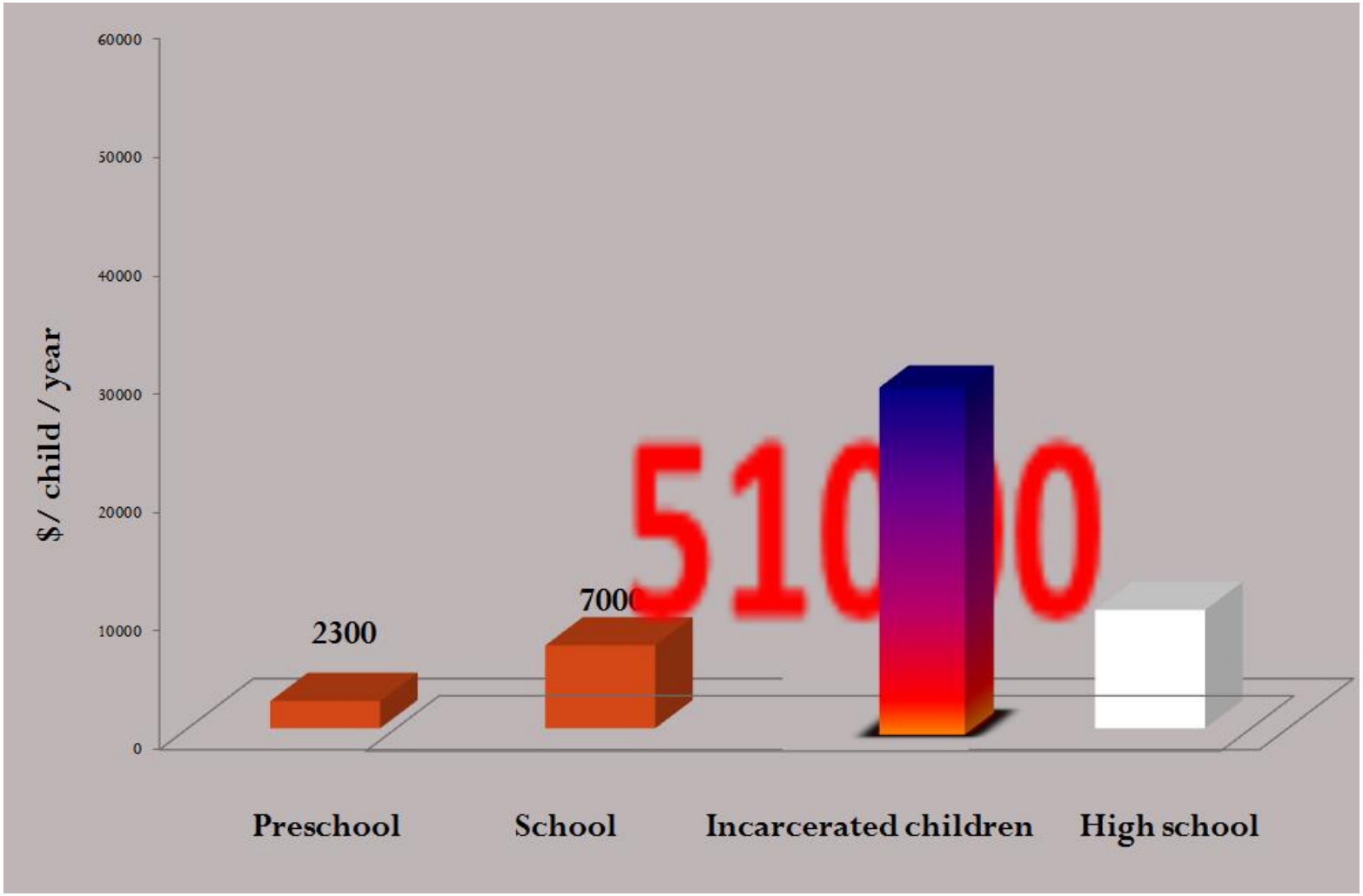
I can

Life Course Problems Related to Early Life Experiences



- **School Failure**
- **Teen Pregnancy**
- **Criminality**
- **Obesity**
- **Elevated Blood Pressure**
- **Depression**
- **Coronary Heart Disease**
- **Diabetes**
- **Premature Aging**
- **Memory Loss**

Investment of the State of Florida during difficult stages of childhood



Partnering with Public Health

- Have always served as beacons for public health dangers
  - Reporting illness patterns, hazards and risky trends
- Reciprocally, pediatricians benefit from population-based information on programs, especially preventive services:
  - Injury prevention
  - Child maltreatment prevention
  - Lead poisoning
  - Tobacco control
  - Breastfeeding promotion
  - Obesity prevention
  - Asthma
  - Trauma
  - Disaster preparedness

Advocacy

- Pediatricians advocated strongly for passage of ACA and for the needs of children (who do not participate in government)
- Legislative advocacy training in Pediatric Residency programs
- Need for financing models for accountable care organizations and other practices to bill for attention to social determinants

Why Target Whole Communities?

- Health and well-being of each person depends on condition of all
- Cannot predict individual course based on group risk factors without considering the social context
- Cost burden of case-finding and treatment too high
- Moral weakness of accepting unequal outcomes

Recommendations

- Increase use of community data about social determinants (EDI and ECRI)
- Partner with public health departments and school districts, child welfare agencies to decrease barriers to health and health care in communities
- Disseminate information about effective community programs and resources for children's health and well-being
- Promote preventive health strategies at individual and population levels
- Engage with primary settings and resources for children's health and development

Recommendations continued…

- Advocate for universal access to medical homes
- Advocate for universal access and quality of the social, economic, educational and environmental capital resources for children's health
- Speak out – use the media
- Pediatric medical education and continuing medical education should include curricula on community and public health, social determinants of health, health care systems and financing, child advocacy