Faculty

Cluster leader: Bruce G. Link

FACULTY ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE DEPARTMENT

Lisa Bates  Sandro Galea  Sharon Schwartz  Katherine Keyes Wild
Magdalena Cerdá  Gina Lovasi  Shakira Suglia  Ezra Susser
Bruce Dohrenwend  Dana March  Lawrence H. Yang

OTHER FACULTY AFFILIATED WITH THE SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY CLUSTER

Luisa N. Borrell  Deborah Hasin  Zena Stein
Leslie Davidson  Christina Hoven  Catherine Stayton
Jeffrey Fagan  Bonnie Kerker  Parisa Tehranifar
Crystal Fuller  Karestan Koenen
Tiffany Gary-Webb  Silvia Martins

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY CLUSTER

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LEARN ABOUT OUR ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAMS

mailman.columbia.edu/admissions

The Social Disease Epidemiology Cluster is one of six clusters in the Department of Epidemiology. The others are Chronic Disease Epidemiology, Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Injury Epidemiology, Lifecourse Epidemiology, and Psychiatric and Neurologic Epidemiology.

mailman.columbia.edu/academic-departments/epidemiology
The social epidemiology cluster seeks to understand the ways in which social, psychological, political, cultural, and economic circumstances influence our chances for a healthy life. We combine theory from the social sciences with rigorous epidemiological methods so that we can illuminate the connections between social factors and health and use what we find to improve health. Within this broad frame we have a special interest in the connections between social inequalities and health inequalities.

The cluster has three aims. First, we aim to produce knowledge about the influence of social circumstances on health with a special emphasis on social inequalities in health. Second, we aim to train and mentor a new generation of scholars and practitioners who have the capacity to conduct rigorous research on the role of social factors in health. Third, we aim to leverage what we learn to improve population health and reduce health inequalities locally, nationally, and across international borders.

Anchored upstream from the more proximal determinants of disease, research in the social epidemiology cluster engages collaboratively with the other epidemiology clusters in the Department, so that the full cascade of influences on health from social conditions to biology can be understood. The social epidemiology cluster builds on its connections with the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Health and Society Scholars Program and the Center for the Study of Social Inequalities and Health. The RWJ program facilitates interdisciplinary collaborations between the biological and social sciences and has dramatically increased contacts between researchers at the Mailman School of Public Health and those elsewhere across multiple disciplines. Students benefit from close ties to the Departments of Sociology and Psychology and the School of Social Work. The Center for Social Inequalities and Health provides a rigorous intellectual basis for the study of health inequalities and support for junior faculty interested in this area, sponsors speakers, seminars, and events that highlight the importance of social inequalities for on the production of health inequalities, and keeps members current on critical issues through a lively journal club.

The social epidemiology cluster sponsors a monthly cluster seminar, a certificate in social determinants of health for MPH students (in collaboration with the Department of Sociomedical Sciences), and offers several courses open to the department.

**Selected Projects**

**EMERGING HEALTH DISPARITIES**
Examining the intersection and mutual influence of socioeconomic status, cognitive ability, and health itself over the lifespan, this study funded by the National Institute for Children’s Health and Development, brings together a broad interdisciplinary group from across CUMC to assess health outcomes in depression, lung function, obesity and other indicators of health.

**STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH A ‘HIGH-RISK’ FOR PSYCHOSIS**
This study addresses the longitudinal trajectory of stigma among a High Risk for Psychosis (HRP) group, as well as the neurocognitive and social cognitive underpinnings of stigma perceptions in this group. We examine how these factors may adversely impact psychological, social, and developmental outcomes among HRP individuals.

**ASSESSING THE ROLE OF STRESS ON CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH AMONG PUERTO RICAN YOUTH**
This study examines the role of social stressors experienced during childhood and adolescence in relation to cardiovascular and metabolic risk profiles among Puerto Rican youth in New York City’s South Bronx and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The dual site design allows for the examination of the role of acculturation, cultural stress and social context as a potential modifier of the child stress and cardiovascular health association.

**BLACK-WHITE HEALTH DISPARITIES AND THE DEPRESSION “PARADOX”**
This multi-method project is seeking to help unravel the so-called paradox, by which Blacks in the U.S. exhibit lower prevalence of depressive disorders than Whites despite higher levels of physical morbidity and greater exposure to social disadvantage and stressors. Using a life-course approach, this study leverages comparisons between groups based on the critical axes of race, nativity, and socioeconomic status.

**Affiliated Centers and Programs**

**THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND HEALTH**
[mailman.columbia.edu/academic-departments/centers/center-study-social-inequalities-and-health](http://mailman.columbia.edu/academic-departments/centers/center-study-social-inequalities-and-health)
The Center for the Study of Social Inequalities and Health, integral to the social epidemiology cluster, works to improve understanding about the inequalities that both divide us and influence our chances for a healthy life. Members are dedicated to uncovering and bringing to light the processes connecting social inequalities and health conditions.

**ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON HEALTH & SOCIETY SCHOLARS**
[chssp.columbia.edu](http://chssp.columbia.edu)
As one of the four sites in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Health & Society Scholars (H&SS) Program, Columbia H&SS promotes innovative and interdisciplinary research in population health. The program integrates faculty and scholars in the health, behavioral, social, and environmental sciences and supports theoretically-informed and methodologically rigorous basic and applied research. The program fosters an intellectual environment open to unexpected insights from our juxtaposition of different disciplines and points of view.

**Training Opportunities**

**PSYCHIATRIC EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM**
The Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program was created in 1972 to equip pre- and postdoctoral fellows with the skills and vision needed to conceptualize, measure, and test ideas about psychiatric disorders that will advance the field in both incremental and ground-breaking ways. To fulfill this mission, we emphasize a framework for investigating the etiology, course, and consequences of mental illness that highlights the dynamic interplay of multiple levels, that is, a person (biology, psychology), in context (family, social network, neighborhood, workplace, society) through time (person and contextual change).