CD country case-study workshop 2013

Incorporating equity in epidemiological research: a brief introduction

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Equity in epidemiology

• Inequities: disparities that are unfair and avoidable

• Why worry about equity?
  – Moral reasons
  – Practical reasons
Inequalities by gender, Pelotas, 1993

- Higher death rates for boys than for girls
- Inequalities, not inequities

Source: Barros, Victora
Types of inequity

- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Geographic (provinces, districts, etc.)
- Urban / rural / slum
- Ethnic group
- Etc.
The different levels of inequities

• “An association between socioeconomic deprivation and ill-health has been found wherever and whenever it has been looked for” (Sir Douglas Black, 2001)

• “and at whatever level of aggregation it has been investigated”
Mosley-Chen analysis

A. Social science approach

Socioeconomic determinants → ? → Mortality

B. Medical science approach

Environmental control → Environmental contamination/Dietary intake → Personal preventive measures → Disease Infection Malnutrition → Therapeutic medical technology → Mortality
Mosley-Chen model for child health
World’s 10 most unequal countries

Gini’s index for income concentration
UNDP 2001

Scandinavian countries
Gini’s index = 0.25
IMR and land tenure: Rio Grande do Sul state
The 1982 Pelotas Birth Cohort Study

- Population-based cohort of 6,000 individuals
- Follow up from birth to 30 years
- One of the longest and largest birth cohorts in LMICs
Field work in Pelotas, 1980’s
Before handing over to Aluisio for methods,

a few thoughts about how countries may improve equity
Equity: what can countries do?

- Recognize that health services often contribute to increasing inequities
- Prioritize diseases of the poor
- Consider the pattern of inequity
- Deploy/improve services where the poor live
- Employ appropriate delivery channels
- Remove financial barriers (user fees, etc)
- Monitor implementation, coverage and impact with an equity lens
Bangladesh: how equity can drive program implementation

By 2006, 148 of 159 sub-districts in the “red” areas had IMCI
Why is equity important?

- Human rights
- Practical reasons

- It is possible to improve equity in health – by mainstreaming equity into health management, monitoring and evaluation
Incorporating equity in epidemiological studies

• Is always possible – and useful
• Must be planned ahead of time
• Does not necessarily require large sample sizes
• May show effects or associations that would not be evident in the whole-sample analyses
• Findings must be interpreted in light of delivery channels
• Failure to incorporate equity is a missed opportunity