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Urban Health: The City is a Strange Woman: Today She Smiles at You and Tomorrow She Devours You"

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Objective: To explore the influence of the urban environment on health and human behavior in order to understand the determinants of health in cities.

Methodology: Descriptive and analytical

Results: The authors conducted a review of the scientific literature on urban health. The structure of the conceptual model shows a network of determinants, where the social and physical features define the context; this is in its turn modulated by factors and social actors. Living conditions contextualize physical, social, economic and political elements. Each is part of a circular influence in the outcome of health-illness.

The epidemiological methods used to study this process were sampling a population according to several social indicators, such as: health knowledge or the absence of it, knowledge, social networks, empowerment, lifestyle, access to goods and services, economics and governance. Among various methodological strategies one finds the use of ecological analysis, contextual and observational, with the aim of studying the etiology of health-related events and understanding how these associations occur. However there are still some challenges such as understanding the physical and social factors and each individual's perception. The last part presents some examples of model studies: urban, urban-rural, intra- and inter-urban. These epidemiological studies describe the association between growth and uneven urbanization and its impact on the mentioned health indicators.

Conclusions: The authors conclude that in recent years the scientific publication of urban health has increased. However, it requires a trans-disciplinary approach, in addition to developing methods with appropriate sensitivity and specificity to capture aspects of public policy.