

# Introduction

Sam Willner

In this number of *Hygiea Internationalis* we present three articles discussing the history of public health and welfare issues from very different approaches and perspectives, illustrating the richness and great variety of the research field. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the authors contributing to an interesting volume of *Hygiea*.

Stephen J Kunitz raises several important questions, having theoretical as well as methodological implications, regarding the use of quantitative survey research in social sciences. Kunitz illustrates the problems by analyzing the association between income inequality and life expectancy or mortality, discussed in several studies since the 1970s. The analyses of the contiguous states of the USA show clearly that spatial autocorrelation or spatial trend could affect the results and must be taken into account, which is usually not the case in most studies. Kunitz do not claim that these techniques are intrinsically worthless but that the results must be understood in their particular historical and social context.

Çimen Günay-Erkol and Arnold Reisman describe the modernization of health care and medical science in 20th century Turkey, particularly focusing on the role played by the German pediatrician Albert Eckstein, working in Turkey between 1935 and 1950. Many physicians, like Eckstein, left Nazi Germany and were actively working and contributing to the modernization of health care and medical science in Turkey during the 1930s. According to the authors did Eckstein contribute “significantly to the implementation of modern public health and pediatric practices in Turkey”. Some important outcomes attributed to him is particularly mentioned: the collection of public health data and using the resulting statistics in improving public health services throughout the country, the eradication of Noma (a disease mostly affecting children and related to malnutrition and poor hygiene) and the contribution to greatly reduced infant mortality rates through improved pre- and post-natal care practices.

Annika Sandén do not explicitly discuss public health but the closely related concepts “welfare” and “social capital”, having obvious implications for public health, in early seventeenth century Sweden, illustrated by the town of Linköping. According to Sandén, a fundamental welfare strategy of the time was to fit people

into households within which they could support themselves. In order to maintain this goal and creating order banishment as well as integration was used. The conclusion is that the residents of the local community expressed a great confidence in formal institutions, such as the church and the municipal court, as exponents for social capital.

We are to a large extent dependent on the contributions from our readers in order to continue presenting new volumes of a good quality. Thus we invite you to submit articles, dealing with the history of public health, to forthcoming issues of *Hygiea*.