

Workshop Overview

The relative success of humans as a species is linked to our adaptability, which may be afforded by our complex social structures interacting with complex biological systems. With the advent of large population datasets containing data on social conditions as well as chemical, physical and biological measures, we can more easily than ever investigate the relationships between factors that are external and internal to the body. This growing field of research has shown that our socially structured experiences elicit a biological response, leading to the observation that numerous biological measures are socially patterned. This 'social-to-biological' research is of interest to researchers across multiple disciplines and topics, typically those with an interest in understanding how social, economic and cultural factors 'get under the skin' to impact on health and wellbeing. However, as with any emerging and/or multidisciplinary field, researchers new to this field need to understand why and how to best make use of combining social and biological data.

This workshop, led by experts from France and Scotland, will give an overview of the opportunities afforded by such social-to-biological research, especially with large, quantitative datasets, in the context of the theoretical and practical considerations involved.

Speakers

Raphaële Castagné, Equity research team, CERPOP, Université de Toulouse, Inserm, Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, France.

Tony Robertson, Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.

Syllabus Overview

- Introduction to social inequalities in health
- Importance of theory and constructs in social epidemiology
- The social to biological transition: theory, biomarkers and data collection in cohort studies
- Examples of social to biological research
- Group work on developing social to biological research questions