

JOURNAL

of Health Inequalities

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to present the *Journal of Health Inequalities*' fifteenth issue. We are delighted that the Journal has developed into a significant and enduring component of the Calisia University and particularly its scientific endeavours. We are also pleased to note the Journal's growing appeal among scholars from around the world, including those in India, Norway, Romania and UK, as indicated by the range of writers, who are also featured in the current issue.

Another important topic addressed by our magazine has become epidemiological analyses documenting the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, a paper has been published presenting the epidemiology of excess deaths in Poland in the first year of the pandemic, before vaccination began (*Int J Environ Res Public Health* 2022; 19: 3692). In the present issue of the Journal we present an epidemiological analysis that constitutes another work to document the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland from March to December 2020 (see: Considerations on mortality in 2020 in Poland in the context of the corona virus pandemic, pp. 98-107). In it, the pattern of the pandemic's spread that distinguishes Poland from other major European nations is brought to light, with a discussion concerning the instances of neglect that contributed to the high number of excess deaths towards the end of 2020. Both studies reach the same conclusion: Poland's COVID-19 mortality rate in 2020 (expressed in excess deaths) was one of the highest among the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In some European countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Norway and Denmark, the number of excess deaths amounted to several hundred per year in 2020-2021, whereas in the same period the number of excess deaths in Poland reached almost 200,000, a situation requiring further, urgent and thorough analysis at various levels. The editorial team of the Journal wishes to open a discussion about the causes of this situation. We encourage our readers to join in the discussion and prepare any comments, which we will publish in the next issue of the Journal. Please prepare your comments in a Letter to the editors format (guidelines for authors are available on the journal's website).

In addition, this issue includes further papers discussing public health policy in Poland. We wish to draw your attention to the texts on public health policy with regard to alcohol, whose negligence has led to a sharp increase in alcohol consumption in Poland's population and the growing epidemic of alcohol related deaths over the last twenty years. We particularly recommend the work entitled "Alcohol and tobacco: different tax policies and different health and revenue consequences in the 21st century in Poland" (pp. 132-136) summarizing the state's pricing policy and changes in the economic availability of alcohol and cigarettes in Poland in the last 20 years. The presented issue also includes comments to the paper published in the previous issue, namely "Life expectancy and alcohol use health burden in Poland after 2002" by Dr. Jarosław Neneman of Lodz University's Institute of Economics (pp. 138) and Professor Janusz Szymborski of the Government Population Council, Poland (pp. 137).

In this issue we also pay tribute to those scientists, members of the editorial team, who passed away this year – Professor Peter Boyle, and Mateusz Zatoński.

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Paulina Wojtyła-Buciora, Katarzyna Pawlikowska-Chechłacz