

## Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social



**Centro Interamericano de  
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# BOOK REVIEW. *EMPLEO, TRABAJO Y DESIGUALDADES EN SALUD: UNA VISIÓN GLOBAL*. JOAN BENACH, CARLES MUNTANER, ORIELLE SOLAR, VILMA SANTANA, AND MICHAEL QUINLAN\*

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**T**his is a stimulating book which explores the relationship between employment conditions and health outcomes. The authors provide a conceptual framework to illustrate the channels through which health outcomes are determined and affected; this framework includes individual and aggregate variables, such as the economic, political and environmental conditions. The book also includes case studies that show the influence of distinct employment environments on health conditions.

It has been until recently that international organizations have recognized that economic development per se should not be the aim of policies. It is necessary to achieve development accompanied by poverty reduction and the improvement of employment conditions. The coming Annual World Report (2013) by the World Bank is expected to address these issues. In this line, the authors make use of valuable information for both developed and developing economies to identify pertinent public policies to address precariousness and poverty in health conditions.

The novelty of the present book is providing a comprehensive view of the relationship between employment and health conditions with the collaboration of a large number of persons during some years. This has been possible thanks to the participation of the authors in a global project organized by the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, and EMCONET-Employment and Health Inequalities Network).

The book is aimed at being used as a reference for political and academic influence. Although health inequality has multiple causes: genetic, individual choices, food and smoking habits and access to health care of good quality, among other factors; it is understood as those differences in health outcomes that are the result of unfair socioeconomic and political conditions, and can be prevented. In general, the most affected are the poor, excluded and exploited workers. There is a geographic and political element as these persons are located in areas with poor services and have

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\* Icaria Editorial. 2010. ISBN: 978-84-9888-4, 158 pages.

less political power. These persons are exposed to higher health risks (environmental, cultural, and social violence).

For the authors, the interrelation of socioeconomic and political factors is the main cause of health inequality. A person with a precarious job, a poor home, services of bad quality, and lack of access to health care, in combination with scarce economic resources, faces risk factors that lead to stress, drinking and smoking, for example. The main question is whether something could have been done to prevent all these risks.

The conclusion is that reductions in health inequality will only be seen with a transformation in the economic and political structures, nationally and internationally. This is a call for the elaboration of economic and social policies for employment creation and poverty reduction that simultaneously improve the social protection of the populations. Otherwise, the achievement in reducing health inequality has a limit imposed by the institutional context that prevails, as can currently be seen.

Reading this book is quite recommended for its comprehensiveness of the topic and the exhaustive literature review that is included. The international financial crisis of 2008 started many thoughts on the fact that the institutional framework in which the world operates at present is inefficient and insufficient to provide employment and social protection simultaneously. CISS (2006, 2012a, and 2012b) discuss these topics with an emphasis in what happens in the Latin American region.

## References

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