



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Manitoba Centre for Health Policy
Dept. of Community Health Sciences
Faculty of Medicine
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Canada
Contact: Jack Rach
204-789-3669
jack_rach@cpe.umanitoba.ca

A REPORT BY THE MANITOBA CENTRE FOR HEALTH POLICY SHOWS THAT WHILE HEALTH IS IMPROVING OVERALL, THE GAP IN HEALTH STATUS BETWEEN RICH AND POOR CONTINUES TO GROW

For Release on Thursday, October 1, 2009

WINNIPEG, Manitoba – The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy released a report that studied the health of Manitobans and the results are positive. The *RHA Indicators Atlas 2009* shows that, on average, men and women are living about six months longer when compared to a similar study five years ago.

“The fact is, in Manitoba health status is improving on average,” says Dr. Randy Fransoo who led the study. “The results of this report show that overall, the health of Manitoba’s population continues to gradually improve over time. Death rates are decreasing, and life expectancy is increasing.”

All 11 Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) participated in this report with contributions from representatives of *The Need to Know* Team. They helped select 105 health-related indicators which will inform healthcare planners and decision-makers to support policy changes geared toward improving health services in their communities.

Researchers found the difference in life expectancy between the healthiest and the least healthy RHA has grown over time. The trend can also be tracked by income – those in the lowest income brackets had a shorter life expectancy than those with higher income. This is also true within urban settings where, on average, wealthy men live about 10 years longer than poor men and wealthy women live over five years longer than poor women.

“This report doesn’t directly answer why the poor are less healthy than the rich but it reinforces the message that the social gradient in health remains strong and is growing,” says Dr. Fransoo. “The wealthy are living longer, while the poor are not.”

This report updates an earlier one published in 2003. Similar to that report it takes a population-based approach which means the results come from anonymized data, routinely collected when Manitobans use the healthcare system such as during a doctor visit or hospitalization.

“The most recent data shows that the healthcare system in the province is working. While it’s unfortunate that the gap in health status appears to be growing, key services are responding to needs appropriately,” says Dr. Fransoo. “For example, residents of lower income areas - who are in the poorest health - had the highest rates of hospitalization and use of prescription drugs.”

MCHP is a research unit in the University of Manitoba’s Faculty of Medicine that conducts world class population-based research on health services, population and public health, and the social determinants of health.

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Dr. Fransoo is available for interviews. For more information, please contact:

Jack Rach, Communications Officer
jack_rach@cpe.umanitoba.ca
(204) 789-3669
Manitoba Centre for Health Policy
408-727 McDermot Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, R3E 3P5



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