

Centre for Welfare and  
Labour Research  
Oslo and Akershus  
University College

Norwegian  
Demographic Society

EAPS Working Group  
on Health, Morbidity  
and Mortality  
(HMMWG)

The social impact of epidemics: A workshop marking 100 years of the Great Flu Epidemic of 1918

September 3 – 5 2018, Oslo and Akershus University College, Oslo, Norway

Epidemics are the natural meeting ground between human civilisations and microscopic organisms. When they meet, some members of the human social group may die, others develop immunity, and the organism may subsequently mutate to the point where it can overcome that immunity. Neither human groups nor those of microorganisms are homogenous, however. For example, some sections of the human group will be more affected and others less, both immediately and over time, as the result of going through the disease itself, or because of social adversities following bereavement and disruption. Consequently, major epidemics are likely to have major effects on the subsequent evolution of society.

The purpose of this workshop will be to focus on these social consequences of major epidemics – the influenza epidemic of 100 years ago and others. We wish to address questions such as: What types of social groups were more and which less, affected by the epidemic? What are the most important factors that influenced the differential impact of the epidemic among groups? What effect, if any, did the epidemic have on social relations and future social developments? Specifically, did it have an impact on marriage, fertility and migration? How did the survivors of the disease and the bereaved spouses and children cope socially and economically later in life? Also, did the knowledge of differential social susceptibility during historical epidemics affect subsequent preventive actions? And how do these insights help us prepare for avoiding socially unjust epidemics in the future?

As in previous HMMWG workshops, there is no participation fee, but participants are expected to cover their own fares and accommodation.

Closing date for abstracts: 15 March 2018

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Responses and tentative programme by the end of April 2018

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