

European Association for Population Studies Working Group on Health, Morbidity and Mortality.

Pre EPC workshop, Brussels, 6th June, 2018

Morbidity compression, morbidity expansion, and dynamic equilibrium: conceptual considerations and new findings

Almost 40 years ago, three different hypotheses were formulated on how time spent in morbidity will develop if life expectancy is increasing. Fries hypothesized that the extension of life expectancy would be accompanied by an equal increase or an extension of healthy lifetime. This would manifest itself through 1) the postponement of the onset age of disease and disability, and 2) declining rates of disease and disability. While Fries assumed a reduction in morbidity-associated lifespan, Gruenberg argued for an expansion of morbidity. Based on these considerations Manton tried to bridge the gap by formulating a third hypothesis: the dynamic equilibrium. Manton argued that an increase of life expectancy might go hand in hand with a constant proportion of healthy lifespan or decreasing severity of diseases and disabilities over time.

Fries has presented evidence in favour of the compression hypothesis from his own studies. Available evidence from other sources is mixed. Some studies have pointed towards compression, but others have found an expansion of morbidity, or a dynamic equilibrium. However, the literature is not consistent in its conceptualization nor in its measurement of the phenomenon. It is thus difficult to know if differences between countries, social groups and different periods in time are real or artefactual.

The purpose of the present workshop is threefold: First, to discuss what we understand by the concepts of morbidity compression and expansion, and what sort of research methods are appropriate; second, to weigh the evidence for morbidity compression, morbidity expansion, or for a dynamic equilibrium. Third, we wish to consider how changes in the pattern of morbidity are related to changes in the pattern of mortality. Together with submitted papers, we also anticipate presentations by a few leading, invited speakers.

If you wish to present a paper in this workshop, please submit an abstract to the organizers: Siegfried Geyer geyer.siegfried@mh-hannover.de and Jon Anson anson@bgu.ac.il, by 28th February 2018. We anticipate confirming participation and publishing a draft programme by the end of March 2018