



GROUND-BREAKING PBS SERIES EXPLORES CAUSES, SEEKS SOLUTIONS TO AMERICA'S HEALTH CRISIS

**Airing four consecutive Tuesdays beginning April 15th, 2008
On KRCB Channel 22 at 9:00 PM**

Over the next two months, an extraordinary PBS documentary series will explore how economic status, social conditions and race profoundly affect health, disease burden and life expectancy.

The television series **Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?** is presented in four separate segments and raises important questions regarding health with far-reaching social and political implications.

- Why does life expectancy in the United States rank 30th among industrialized countries in spite of our spending almost twice as much per person on health care as any other nation on the globe?
- Why are our infant mortality rates among the highest relative to other industrialized countries?

Unnatural Causes examines the alarming socioeconomic and racial disparities in health in our country and explores key research and initiatives addressing the causes. One of the most compelling research findings is the strong gradient to health whereby people tend to be sicker and die sooner as their socioeconomic status decreases within society. Poor Americans die an average of five years earlier than the middle class. But middle class Americans die three years sooner than those who are wealthy.

Here in Sonoma County our local data also reveals the strong relationships between disease risk factors and prevalence and social conditions:

- Sonoma County residents with higher levels of education have lower rates of diabetes and heart disease¹
- A higher percentage of Sonoma County residents in the lower income levels are obese compared to those in higher income categories.²
- Adults and teens in the lowest income levels are over twice as likely to be current smokers compared to those in the highest income category³
- Infant mortality among children born to African American mothers in our county is almost four times higher than the rate of infants born to White and Latina mothers⁴

¹ Source: California Health Interview Survey, 2003 & 2005 for Sonoma County of Sonoma

² Source: California Health Interview Survey, 2003 & 2005 for Sonoma County of Sonoma

³ Source: California Health Interview Survey, 2003 & 2005 for Sonoma County

⁴ Source: California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics, Birth Files, 2003-2005

Unnatural Causes will stimulate important dialogue on what we can- and should- do to tackle health inequities in our community and in our nation.

The Sonoma County Medical Association, the Sonoma County Medical Association Alliance, the County Department of Health Services, Community Action Partnership and the Sonoma Health Access Coalition are partnering with KRCB-Channel 22 to bring this important series to Sonoma County. KRCB will air Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick? on Tuesday, April 15th, 22nd, 29th and May 6th at 9:00PM. The KRCB series will include interviews with community leaders sharing a local perspective and data on this important issue.

KQED will also air this documentary beginning on March 27th.

More information on the Unnatural Causes series is available at www.unnaturalcauses.org.