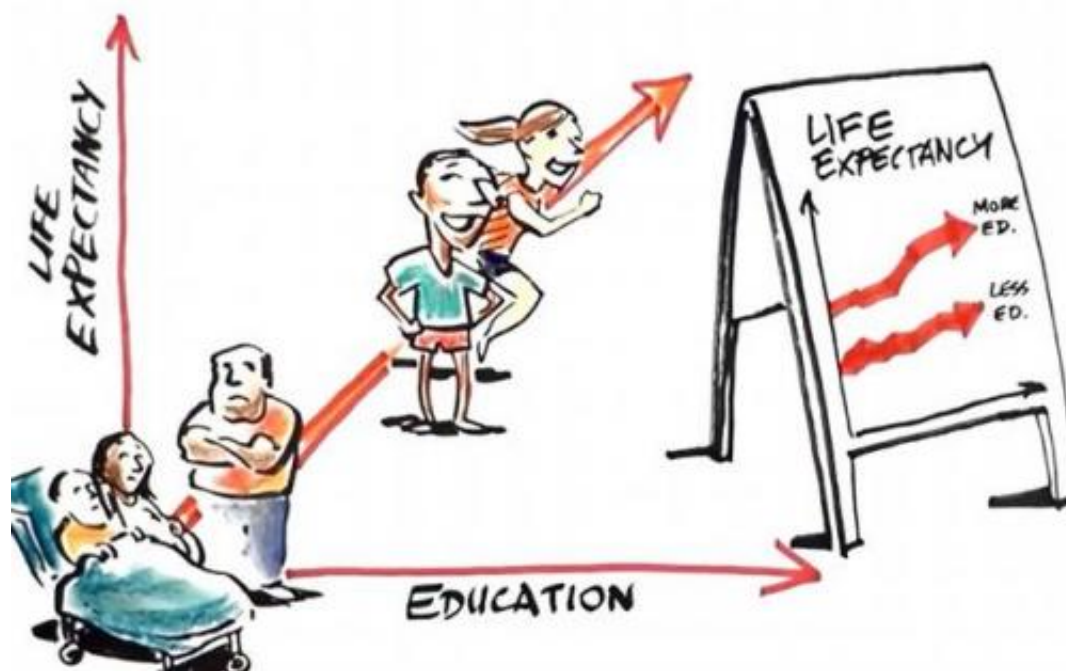


People with less education are living sicker, shorter lives than ever before

January 8 2014, by Tyler Weingart



(Medical Xpress)—Americans without a high school diploma are living sicker, shorter lives than ever before, and the links between education and health matter more now than they have in the past, says a new policy brief and video released today by the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Society and Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

While overall [life expectancy](#) has increased throughout the industrialized world, Americans without a [high school](#) education are being left behind. In fact, life expectancy is now decreasing for whites with fewer than 12 years of education – especially white women. Additionally, lower rates of education tend to translate into much higher rates of disease and disability and place greater strains on mental [health](#).

Overall, people with less education face a serious health disadvantage. They are:

- Living shorter lives. In the United States, 25-year-olds without a [high school diploma](#) can expect to die nine years sooner than [college graduates](#).
- Living with greater illness. By 2011, the prevalence of diabetes had reached 15 percent for adults without a [high school education](#), compared with 7 percent for college graduates.

The policy brief highlights research suggesting that education is important not only for saving lives, but also for saving dollars and creating economic productivity.

People with fewer years of education accrue higher medical costs and are less productive at work, which means that inadequate education is costing employers. The health benefits of a good education include greater access to health insurance, medical care and higher earnings to afford a healthier lifestyle and to reside in healthier homes and neighborhoods.

An animated video, also released today, helps illustrate these connections and explains the impact of decreased education on society.

"I don't think most Americans know that children with less education are destined to live sicker and die sooner," said Steven H. Woolf, M.D.,

director of the VCU Center on Society and Health. "It should concern parents, and it should concern policy leaders. In today's knowledge economy, policymakers must remember that cutting 'non-health' programs like education will cost us more in the end by making Americans sicker, driving up health costs and weakening the competitiveness of our economy."

Through the center's new Education and Health Initiative (EHI), Woolf and his colleagues hope to sound the alarm and raise awareness about the important connections between education and health. With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the EHI will be releasing three follow-up briefs demonstrating why an investment in education is an investment in health.

More information: Read the entire policy brief here:
societyhealth.vcu.edu/DownFile.ashx?fileid=1739

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

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