

# Working group tackles public health and health inequality

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Public health and health inequality are embedded in complex systems, and public health officials stand to gain from a complex systems approach, according to co-organizers of a working group begin held this week at SFI.

"Complex systems approaches are still new in [public health](#), and they're quite promising," says Ross Hammond, especially when it comes to understanding demographic disparities in [health outcomes](#) – for example, why physical activity varies so much as a function of age and race.

Hammond, a Brookings Institution senior fellow and SFI External Professor, is co-organizing the meeting with University of Michigan

professor emeritus George Kaplan.

The two-day gathering is the capstone meeting of the Network on Inequality, Complexity, and Health project, or NICH, a diverse collaboration of North American researchers from epidemiology, economics, computer science, human development, sociology, and other fields, co-founded by Kaplan.

NICH's diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity, Hammond says. While the team is still working on how to successfully communicate the value of [complex systems](#) to different audiences, "or me what's coming out of NICH are new partnerships, new colleagues, and a more honed sense of where the interesting questions may lie," he says.

The invitation-only meeting is focused on finalizing a number of papers authored by NICH subteams, and on creating a final product summarizing NICH's work.

"We're trying to figure out how to have a lasting impact," Hammond says.

Provided by Santa Fe Institute

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