

Public health researchers recommend reevaluating approach amid declining US life expectancy

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Since 2015, average life expectancy in the US gradually declined among all racial and ethnic groups, which included declines in nearly 12

preventable diseases and conditions such as substance abuse, chronic diseases, mental health factors, metabolic diseases and various cancers. In a recent opinion piece published in the February 12th online edition of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health recommend possible solutions to this growing health issue.

"Our recommendation is that we take a more integrated and more holistic approach to research whereby we do not study biology in a vacuum, but in the context of socioeconomic and political factors," explains K.M. Venkat Narayan, MD, MSc co-author and the Ruth and O.C. Hubert Chair in Global Health at Rollins School of Public Health.

Life expectancy in the US ranks lowest among other high-income countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). OECD includes 36 of the world's most advanced and emerging countries that span from North and South America to Europe and the Asia-Pacific. The US also averages 2.5 times the average health spending of OECD countries; and spends nearly \$171.6 billion annually on medical and [health research](#). Authors suggest realigning priorities to create a better understanding of potential solutions for improvement.

"The difficult part is that we are not dealing with a single factor," says James W. Curran, MD, dean and professor of epidemiology at the Rollins School of Public Health. "We have to understand how all of these additional important factors—socio-economic and political—interact with biology and access to care"

Authors call for a realignment of the nation's research investments toward transdisciplinary science in order to better identify actionable solutions to improve population health.

Provided by Emory University

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