The genie is out of the bottle: Ethnic health disparities in Israel

Health disparities are differences in health status and risks between members of disadvantaged social groups—such as the poor, and ethnic minorities who have persistently experienced social disadvantage or discrimination—and members of advantaged social groups. In recent years research on health disparities in Israel, most studies focus on inequality in health outcomes between Jews and Arab Israelis as well as between recent Jewish immigrants to the country and native Israelis. In the current work I focus on health disparities between Mizrahim (Jews of Middle Eastern origin) and Ashkenazim (Jews of European/American origin). Despite evidence showing persistent inequality between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in levels of education and average income, the common perception is that this group-based inequality is long gone. I will present data on ethnic health disparities between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, in psychiatric morbidity, prognosis post myocardial infarction and suicide rates among persons with cancer - all pose important public health concerns. In addition, I will propose potential mediating mechanisms that may underlie the relationship between ethnicity and health disparities and present initial data in support. Finally, I will discuss the complex relationship between ethnicity and socioeconomic status in the study of health disparities.