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## International comparison of health determinants: let's move on to the next step

*Profs. Morabia and Abel are editors-in-chief of this journal*

*Since January 2001, eleven contributions presenting data from seven different nations have been published in SPM in the section entitled International comparison of health determinants (Bernstein et al. 2001; Schilling et al. 2001; Ulmer et al. 2001; Van Oyen et al. 2001; Rehm & Eschmann 2002; Gasse et al. 2002; Britton et al. 2002; Kurth et al. 2002; Bartali et al. 2002; Azizi et al. 2002; Woringer & Schütz 2003). The main idea behind the section was that “papers submitted to this section should adopt a standardized format. Data presented in a similar fashion will be more comparable” (Morabia & Abel 2001). The notes for authors indicate that: “Distribution of health determinants are presented in an Appendix, stratified by gender and 5-year age groups, starting with 0–4, 5–9, etc. For each gender and age specific categories, present the percentiles 10, 50, 90, the mean and the SD. See Bernstein et al., SPM 2001; 46 (1): 49–59 for a model. The paper itself presents a detailed description of the survey design and the measurement methods. Results focus on the most salient observations beyond the descriptive statistics included in the Appendix. Percentiles are shown, when relevant, with their confidence intervals. If data on similar variables have been published in the literature, and specifically as contributions to this section of SPM, use the corresponding appendix as a source of comparison and discussion.”*

*The papers published so far in the section have covered aspects as diverse as physical activity, anthropometry, alcohol consumption, hearing disability. From this perspective, the section has been successful. The studies originated from mostly Europe, but also from the United States and from the Middle East. Authors have been very supportive of the idea to present their result in more easily comparable formats and most data were made to fit into the presentation criteria that we had established.*

*For the next step we would like to encourage our readers and authors to make use of the papers previously published in the section, employing this unique data source as an instrument for international comparisons of health determinants. These papers provide a unique source of standardized information that can be used to study, discuss and understand population variability in health and its determinants. We invite future contributors to the section to compare their data with those already published in the section, tabulate them and discuss their findings.*

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