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Sommario/riassunto	Poorer people live shorter lives and are more often ill than the rich. This disparity has drawn attention to the remarkable sensitivity of health to the social environment. This publication examines this social gradient in health, and explains how psychological and social influences affect physical health and longevity. It then looks at what is known about the most important social determinants of health today, and the role that public policy can play in shaping a social environment that is more conducive to better health.