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Keeping Warm and Staying Well. Does Home Energy Efficiency Mediate the Relationship between Socio-economic Status and the Risk of Poorer Health?

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Abstract

This paper discusses the findings of two surveys, undertaken in 2000 and 2001, which investigated relationships between home energy efficiency, socio-economic status and respondent health. Data were collected through interviews with an informant from each household and energy surveys. Respondents were drawn from relatively poor households. The main health measure used in the analysis, respondent-assessed overall health, was statistically significantly related to other health indicators, including SF36 scores, the reported presence of limiting conditions and health care behaviours such as visiting the GP. Worse respondent self-assessed health was statistically significantly related to occupational, wealth and income measures of poorer socio-

economic status. However, measures of heating satisfaction and sense of mastery displaced the socio-economic measures when they were included in the predictive logistic regression model for self-assessed respondent health. Objective home energy efficiency, measured by SAP ratings, was associated with health in the model independently of the subjective measure. The findings support other evidence that home energy efficiency makes an important contribution to the relationship between lower socio-economic status and poorer health, and document the combined relationship between objective and subjectively measured home energy efficiency and health.

Keywords:

Energy efficiency | fuel poverty | socio-economic status | health

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