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TITLE: Challenging health inequity in the Asia-Pacific: advancing a dynamic, global approach to ‘the social’ in determining health disparities

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The indivisible link between health disparities and social inequality is now universally recognised. The former are understood to be a consequence of the latter, a relationship popularised by what is known globally as ‘the social determinants of health’ approach. This paper focuses on health inequity in the Asia-Pacific beginning with an overview of health disparities in low- and high-income countries within the region. The paper then turns to the ‘social determinants of health’ approach as the dominant global policy and research response to understanding and redressing this problem, and identifies significant limitations, especially those related to measurable, category-based conceptualisations of ‘the social’. A critical sociological approach is proposed as an alternative, offering a framework for understanding and action that renders health disparities and social inequalities indivisibly related through structures of embodied social process/practice. Returning to the Asia-Pacific, the paper focuses on one such dynamic - global social division, and its relationship to neoliberalism - to illustrate how the social ‘works’ in generating the inequitable health fortunes characterising the region and its peoples.