Poverty, employment and health: what can doctors do?

Peter Sainsbury

RACP

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Outline

1. Social determinants of health
2. Health inequalities and 'The Gradient'
3. What can society do?
4. What can doctors do?
5. Conclusions

Traditional determinants of health

1   Environmental

- Physical – climate, altitude,
- Living – bacteria, plant toxins, tigers

2   Biological

- Genes
- Age and sex
- Physiology – blood pressure, diabetes

3   Behavioural

- Own - smoking, diet, physical activity
- Others – smoking, driving

Social determinants of health

- Income
- Wealth
- Education
- Housing
- Cultural practices
- Gender
- Built environment

- Social class
- Socio-economic status
- Ethnicity
- Employment
- Social capital
- The social hierarchy
- Place of residence

Social determinants of health

- Income
- Wealth
- Education
- Housing
- Cultural practices
- Gender
- Buil...

- Social class
- Socio-economic status
- ...city
- Employment
- Social capital
- The social hierarchy
- Place of residence

Discrimination

Limit life opportunities

Hunt in packs

Meaning of 'Social' DoH

- That which is socially created
- … arise from the way we organise society
  - structures, processes and institutions

- NOT that which is natural in origin …
- … or even created by god

~~Social determinants of health~~

Societally created influences on health

Life expectancy at birth by income, Australia, 2003
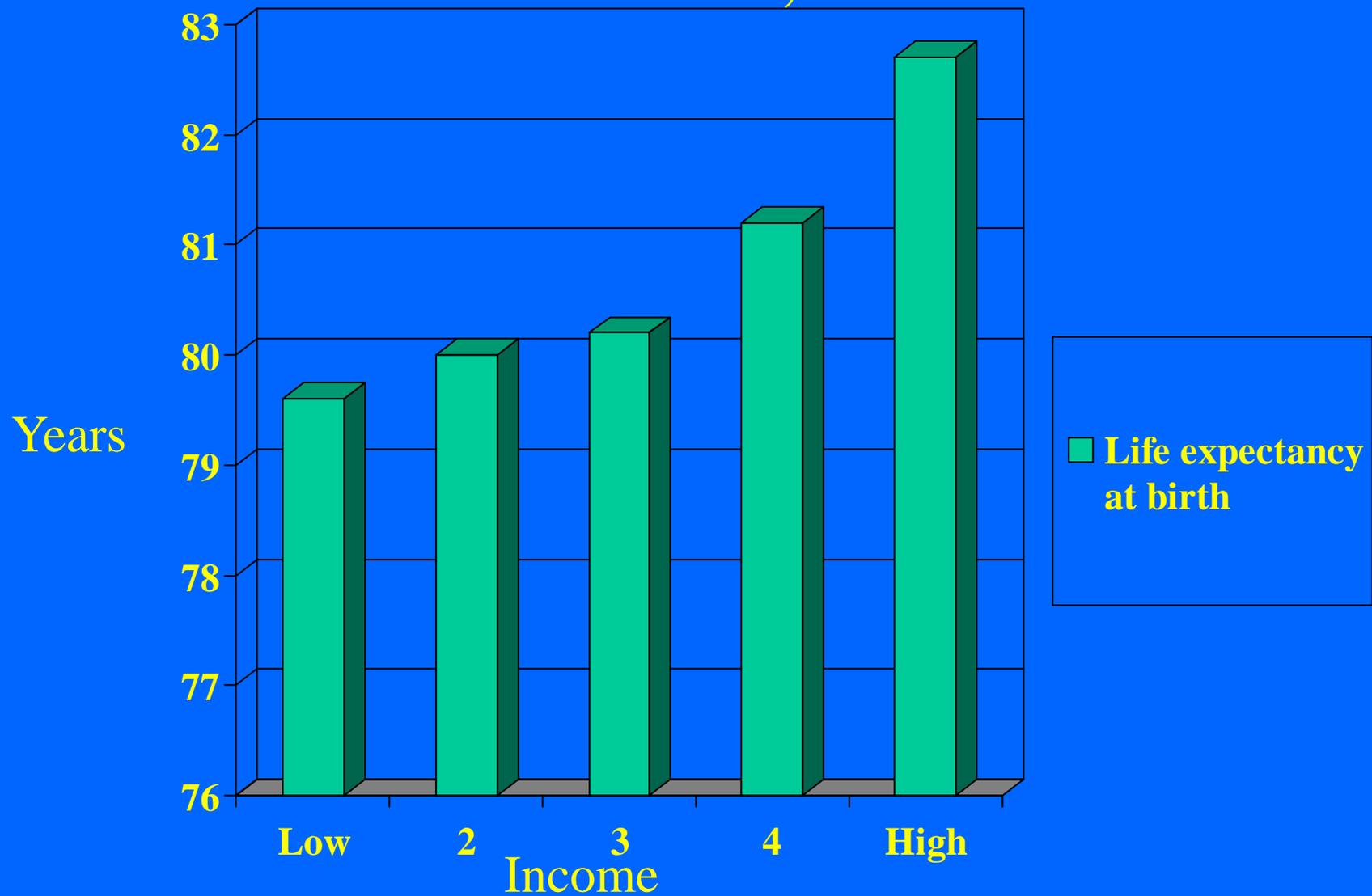
Begg 2007

# Hospitalisations (per 100,000 pop.) after heart attack by SES, NSW, 2009-11

NSW BHI 2012
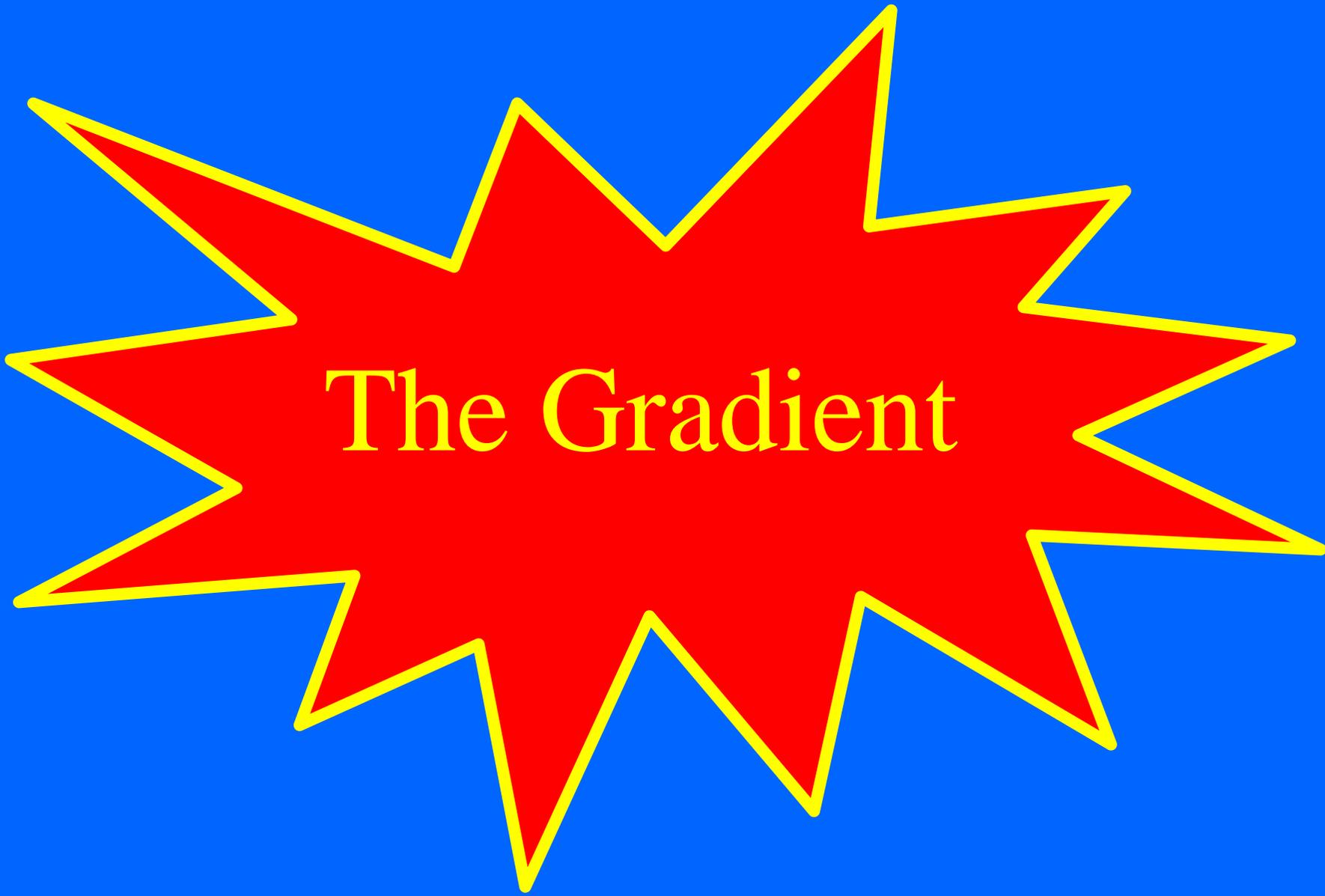
The Gradient

Gradient throughout society

Good

Health ↑

Bad

Poor (Unprivileged)   Rich (Privileged)
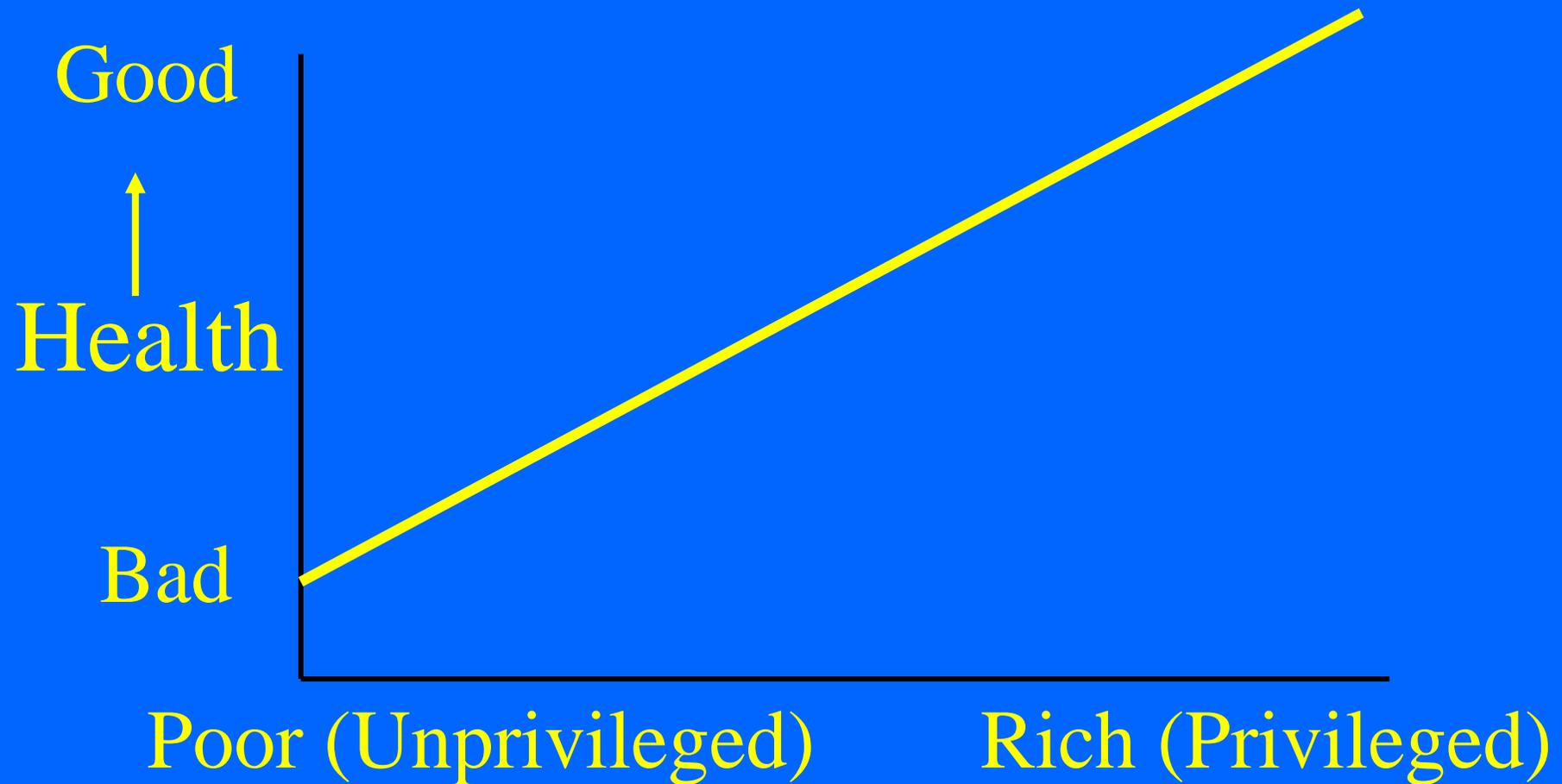
If only the poor had poor health…

Health

Poor　　　　　　　　　　　Rich

Gradient throughout society

Good

Health →

Bad

Little bit wealthier, little bit healthier

Poor (Unprivileged)   Rich (Privileged)
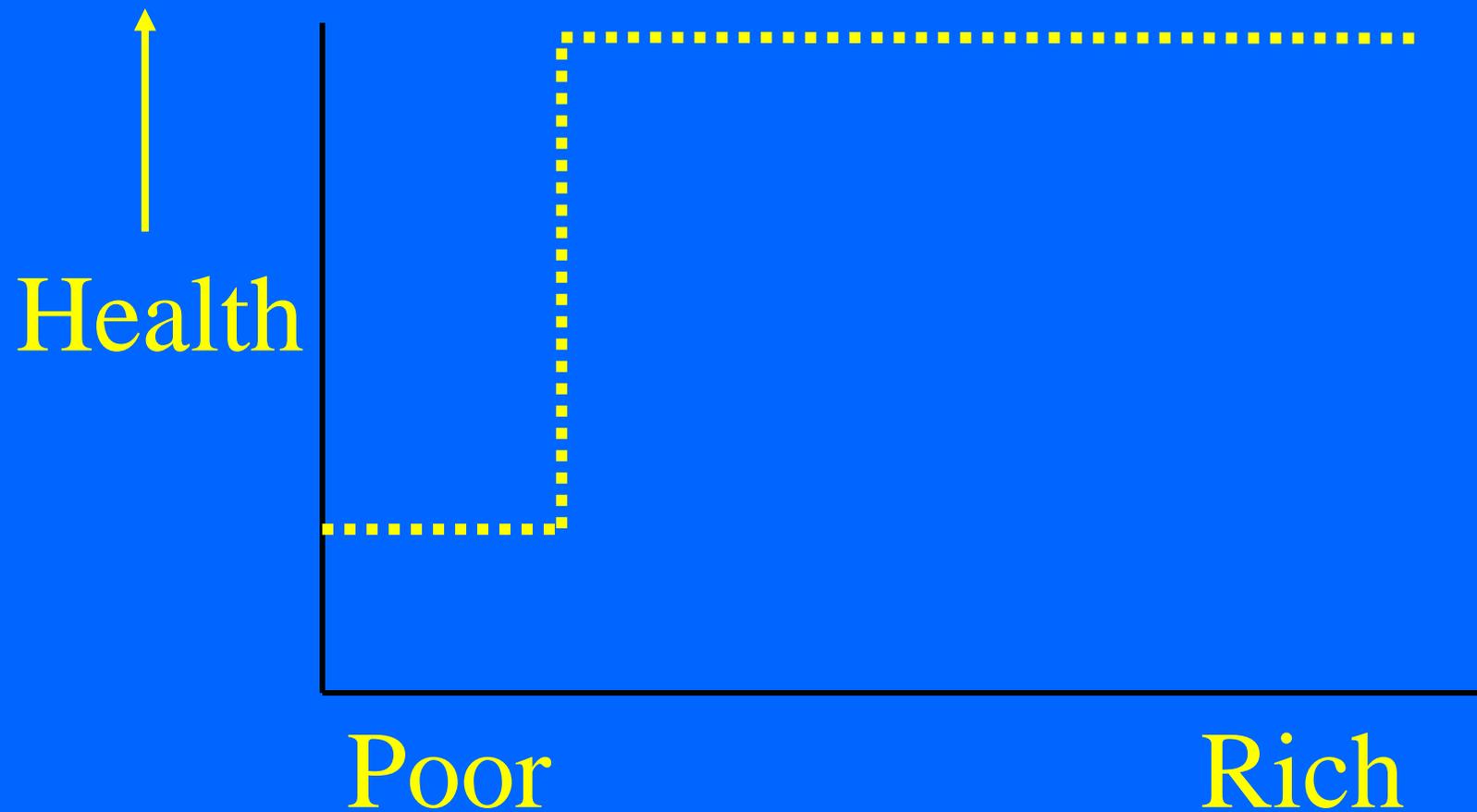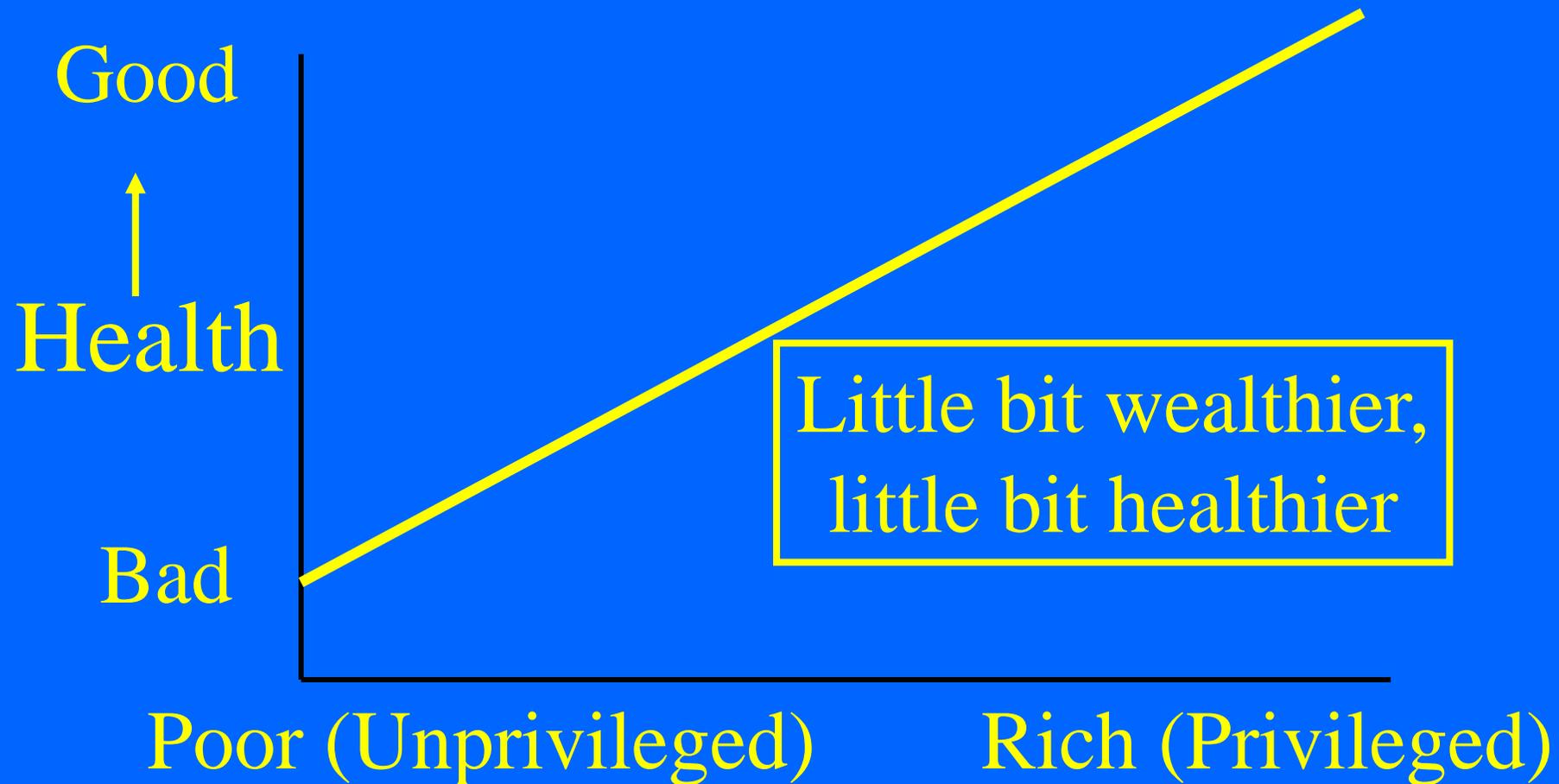
So what can society do?

Changing the gradient
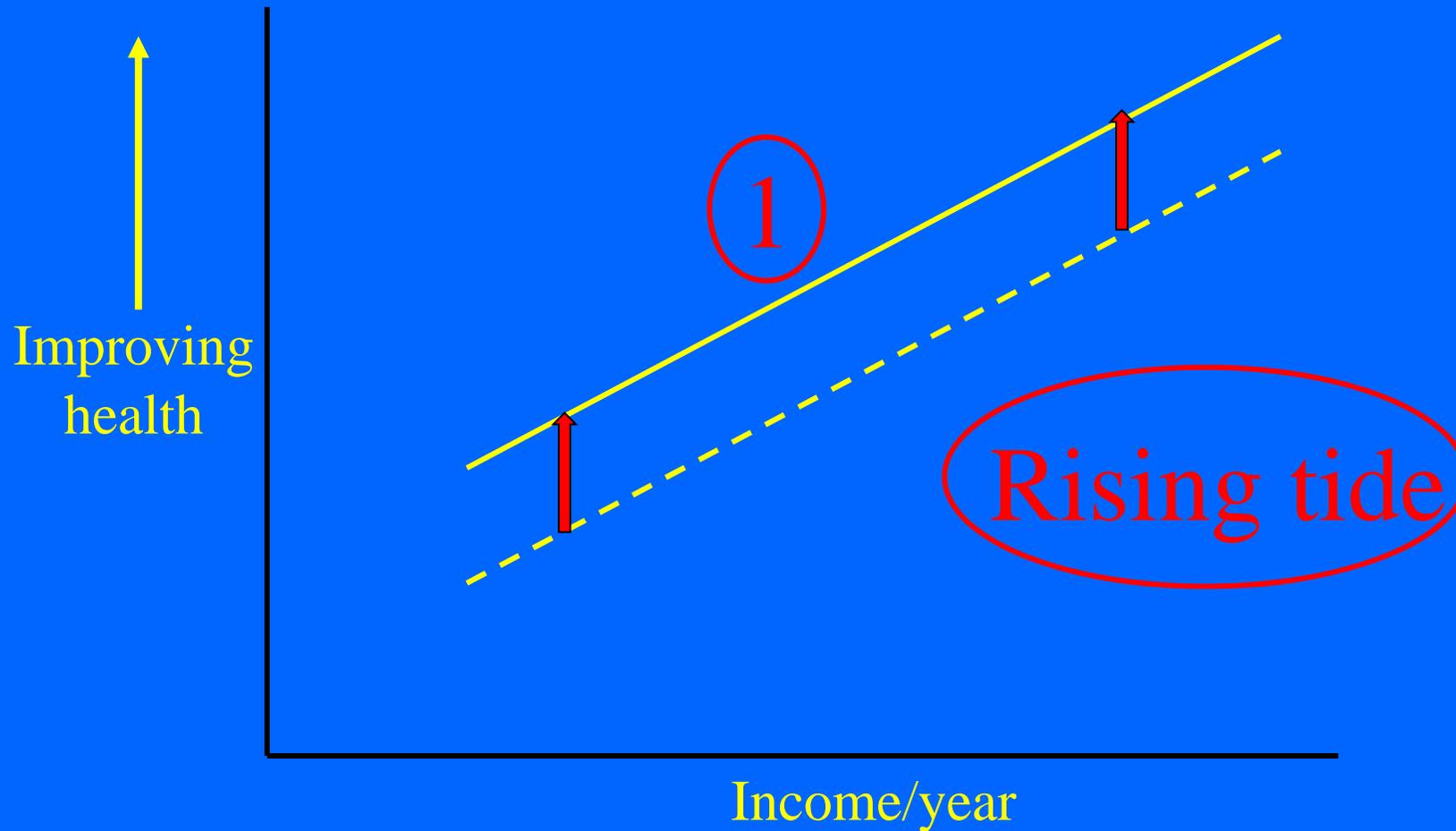
Improving health

Income/year

10k 50k 100k 150k 200k

1

Rising tide

Changing the gradient

Safety net

2

Improving health

Income/year

10k   50k   100k   150k   200k

Changing the gradient

Improving health

Income/year

3

Progressive universalism

10k   50k   100k   150k   200k

Changing the gradient

Improving health

④

?

Fairness and health

Income/year
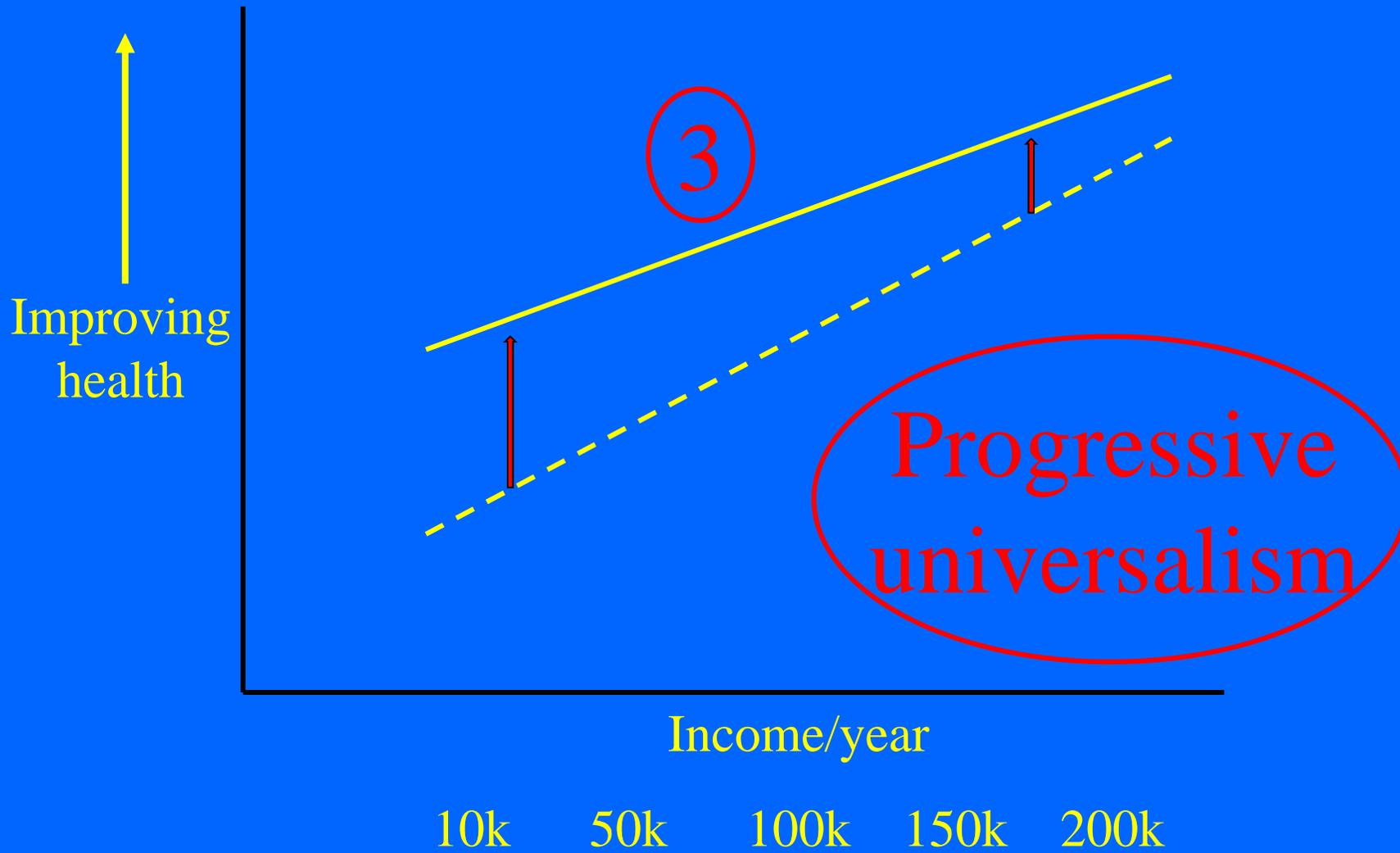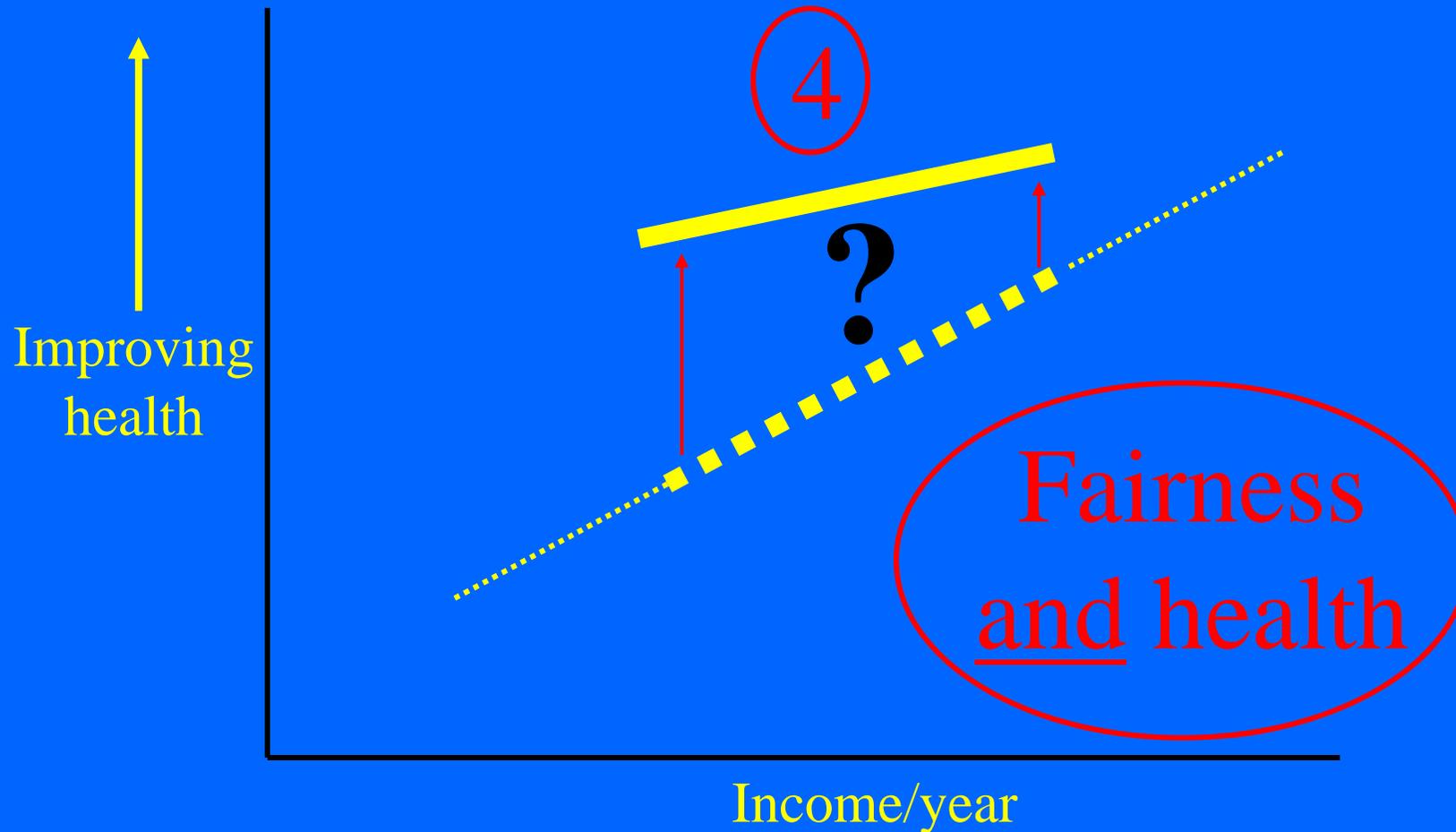
10k   50k   100k   150k   200k

What's the relevance of this to me (and the RACP)?

What do you see as a doctor's (and the profession's) job?

- To manage illness and injury?

and/or

- To promote health?

What do we see as a doctor's
(and the profession's) job?

- To manage illness and injury?

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What does society expect of us?

What has 'Health' been doing?

- Caring for most oppressed and vulnerable
- Caring for disadvantaged communities
- Delivering health services ?a bit more equitably

What must 'Health' do more of?

- Caring for most oppressed and vulnerable
- Caring for disadvantaged communities
- Delivering health services a <u>lot</u> more equitably

Move from 'safety net' to 'fairness' approach

- Fairer distribution of social determinants
- Monitor and report on patterns of health and social determinants
- Make a fuss

How can you change your practice to tackle the societal influences on health and reduce health inequalities?

– Make equity a personal and service goal

– Orient what you do to achieving it

– Monitor outcomes and modify practice

UK CMO's 10 tips for health

- Don't smoke
- Balanced diet
- Physically active
- Manage stress
- Moderate alcohol

- Sun protection
- Safe sex
- Cancer screen
- Road safety
- Learn First Aid

Social determinants alternative

- Don't be poor
- Don't live in poor area
- Don't be disabled
- Don't work in low paid job
- Don't live in poor housing

- Be able to afford to have fun
- Don't be a lone parent
- Claim all benefits
- Be able to afford a car
- Get a good education

Conclusions

- Help individuals be healthier
- Never forget the gradient
- Make our practices and services fairer
- Remember the 'social determinants alternative'
- Be political – create a better society
- Help make life's opportunities available to everyone

Climate change

Sainsbury's best buys for health services to tackle the social determinants of health

- <u>Universal prevention programs</u> – diet, activity, etc
- <u>Brief interventions</u> for smoking cessation
- Focus on the <u>early years</u> – breastfeeding, nurse home visiting, parenting, child care
- Work with <u>schools</u> to promote health
- Tackle <u>common risk factors</u> for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, oral health, mental health
- Focus on <u>disadvantaged</u> areas and people
- Make <u>equity</u> an objective for all services