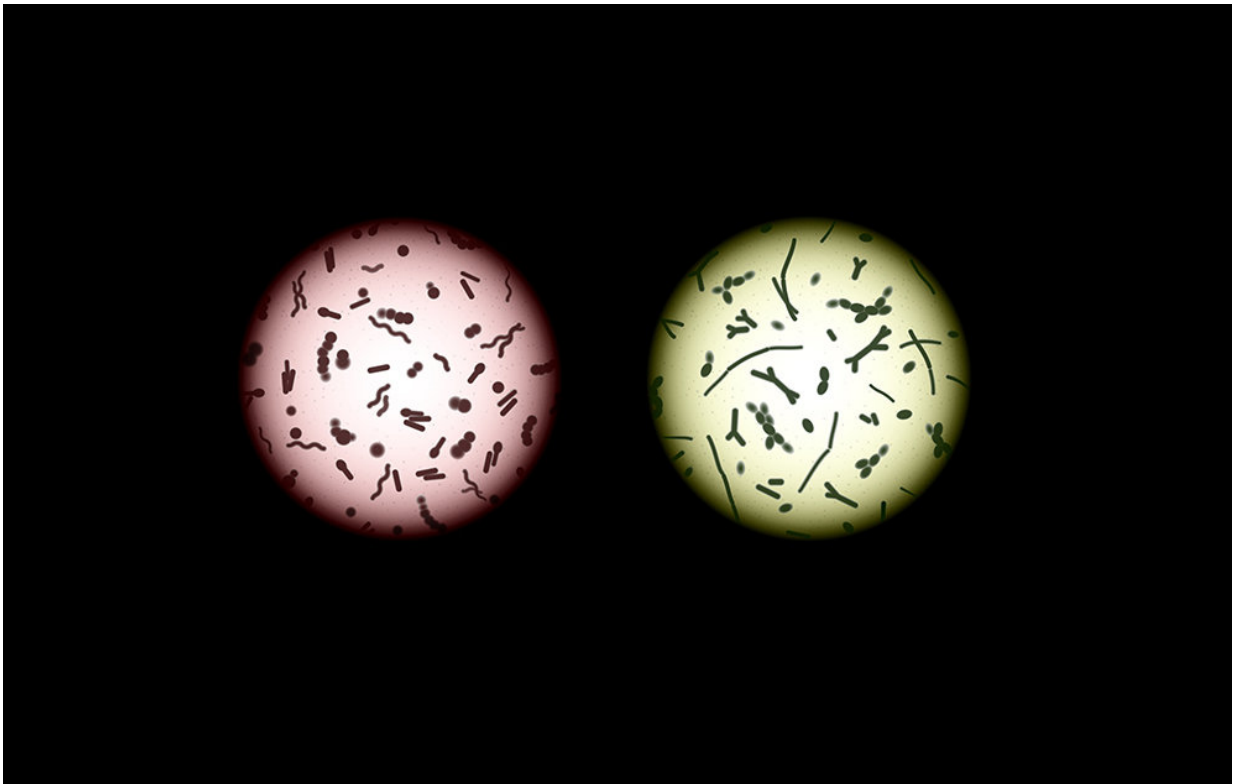


Exploring the social epidemiology of the microbiome

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Credit: The City University of New York

The microbiome is emerging as a factor for many diseases for which there are known health disparities, pointing to the opportunity for investigation of this new area of biology in social and population health research. While recent research establishes the importance of the

microbiome for human health, data on how the social environment shapes the microbiome is limited.

Jennifer Dowd, Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at CUNY SPH, and recent MPH graduate Audrey Renson published a paper describing potential mechanisms of the social epidemiology of the microbiome. The review appeared in the journal *Current Epidemiology Reports*.

In the paper, the researchers laid out the many factors that shape the microbiome in humans, such as social relationships, socioeconomic status, and health behaviors.

"While research in this area is still very new, we found evidence of the importance of early life exposures, psychosocial stress, and the built environment in influencing the microbiome," says Dowd. "We argue that broader consideration of how the [social environment](#) shapes the microbiome over the life course is needed to understand variation in the microbiome and ultimately how to intervene on it."

More information: Jennifer Beam Dowd et al. "Under the Skin" and into the Gut: Social Epidemiology of the Microbiome, *Current Epidemiology Reports* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s40471-018-0167-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40471-018-0167-7)

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