RELATIVE POVERTY AND CHILD MORTALITY IN HAITI
A Hill, B Shaffer, E Doucette, S Obenhaus, S Shaffer
E. Grey Dimond MD International Medicine Program, The University of Missouri – Kansas City, School of Medicine, Kansas City, MO

Haiti suffers from both the worst poverty and highest child mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere. The purpose of this investigation was to assess the relationship of child mortality to relative degrees of poverty within Haiti.

**Method:** We conducted a survey of 656 women, 15-45 years of age, living in a particularly poor rural area of southern Haiti. Data was collected regarding living conditions (dwelling size, occupants, construction characteristics, presence of a latrine, and water access) and pregnancy outcome (number of pregnancies, pregnancy losses, stillbirths, and child deaths). Relative poverty, as indicated by living conditions, was compared with pregnancy outcome using pooled and individual variables.

**Results:** Using a scoring system for pooled variables, a significant correlation was found between overall living conditions and overall pregnancy outcome, i.e. women living in a thatched house with a dirt floor and no latrine were more likely to have a pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or child death when compared to mothers living in a house with a cement floor, sheet metal roof, and access to a latrine (p<0.01). Among individual descriptors of poverty, we noted that women living in a dwelling with a dirt floor reported 71 child deaths following 817 live births (9%). Whereas, women living in a dwellings with a cement floor reported 63 child deaths following 1101 live births (6%), p = 0.01, relative risk of child mortality = 1.5.

**Conclusion:** Child mortality risk is heterogeneous. Even within a poor neighborhood in a poor country, stratifications of poverty and health outcome are discernable. Certain living conditions may be practical indicators of risk and thereby useful to direct interventions and resources.