

Explaining and predicting illness

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WHAT makes a good medical prediction?

While there has been a huge emphasis on getting “good evidence” for medical treatments, as well as evidence for what is good or bad for you, Alex Broadbent, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Johannesburg, said these claims remained largely confusing.

Broadbent, the author of *Philosophy of Epidemiology*, said yesterday that hunting for the causes of diseases was not the same thing as explaining and predicting diseases.

Epidemiology is the science that studies the way diseases are distributed and caused in human populations; the study of philosophical questions that come up when looking into the science of epidemiology.

“Obtaining and publishing the ‘best evidence’ for a claim is not enough – epidemiologists must also assess whether the claim is stable or not.”