

ON THE MEASUREMENT OF INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH*

ADAM WAGSTAFF,¹ PIERELLA PACI² and EDDY VAN DOORSLAER³

¹School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QN, U.K. ²Department of Social Sciences, City University, London EC1V 0HB, U.K. and ³Institute of Medical Technology Assessment, Erasmus University, 3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Abstract—This paper offers a critical appraisal of the various methods employed to date to measure inequalities in health. It suggests that only two of these—the slope index of inequality and the concentration index—are likely to present an accurate picture of socioeconomic inequalities in health. The paper also presents several empirical examples to illustrate of the dangers of using other measures such as the range, the Lorenz curve and the index of dissimilarity.

Key words—inequalities in health, social class, comparative research, mortality, morbidity