

Descriptive Epidemiology

Descriptive Epidemiology

1. Introduction

- Descriptive epidemiology examines the distribution of disease by person, place, and time.
- It answers who, where, and when, and generates hypotheses about causes.

2. Person

- **Who is affected:** age, sex, occupation, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.
- Different groups often have different patterns of disease and exposure.

3. Place

- **Where disease occurs:** comparisons between countries, regions, urban and rural areas.
- Spatial patterns can point to environmental or infrastructural causes.

4. Time

- **Trends:** long-term increases or decreases in disease.
- **Seasonal variation:** regular peaks at certain times of year.
- **Epidemics:** a sudden rise above the expected level.

5. Uses of Descriptive Studies

- Describing the burden and pattern of disease for planning.
- Generating hypotheses that analytical studies can then test.

6. Summary

- Descriptive epidemiology organises data by person, place, and time to reveal patterns and raise questions about causation.