Darwinian Medicine:
How evolutionary biology can improve public health
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Of evolutionary biology’s many practical applications in medicine, those in public health are potentially the most important. Some, such as population genetics are well-established. Many of the recent advances come, however, from asking evolutionary questions about why the body is the way it is. Why is the pelvic outlet so narrow that childbirth is dangerous? Why does the appendix persist? Why are coronary arteries so narrow and prone to inflammation? And, why do humans have a capacity for low mood and depression? These are evolutionary questions whose answers come from studies about why natural selection has left the body vulnerable to disease. The answers can be of direct clinical relevance, but are more often important for epidemiology and public health. This lecture will provide a variety of examples.

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