

Causal dispositionalism in health science

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Causation is manifest in all aspects of health science research and practice, e.g. causes of disease, causes of treatment effects, causes between surrogate and functional outcomes etc. An understanding of the nature of causation is thus essential to the progress of health science.

The focus of my research is on causal matters related to treatment effects, and specifically how causation relates to individual clinical decisions of treatment choice. Causal claims of therapeutic interventions are made by particular research methods, e.g. randomised controlled trials.

I argue that the way health science presently structures these claims is not consistent with how causation is best understood. I consider causation to be far more complex and context-sensitive than the present evidence-based practice model allows. The problem is best highlighted when attempts are made to translate research data to individual instances of clinical decision making. I defend the theory of causal dispositionalism in offering a more relevant theory of causation for health science than present causal constructs.