Figure 7. A causal diagram used as the basis for statistical analysis

Two drafts of this diagram are shown, to illustrate the importance of diagram design, which should aim at clarity. The second draft places the variables in a clear hierarchy. This makes it easy to see which (three) variables are causal but not caused, the (one) variable that is caused but not causal, and the position of the other variables. In particular, it reveals at a glance that the system is acyclic, whereas with the first draft it requires more detailed attention to check that this is the case. It may also be easier to see which variables are potential confounders for which other variables.

First draft:

Second draft:

BMI: body mass index
RII: Relative Index of Inequality

An arrow from one variable to another means possible association. Bold arrows mean known consistent causal associations.