



Understanding Health Equity



Objectives

- Members should be able to understand the importance of health equity in terms of advocacy, practice, and perspective.
- Members should be able to define health equity, social determinants of health, and health disparities.

A decorative border with a teal and white geometric pattern, resembling a mosaic or tessellation, frames the central white circle.

How would you define health equity?

Chat in small groups for 2 minutes.

DEFINITIONS

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Health Equity

Definition:

The state of everyone having equitable access to health and care. Equitable access is understood to be recognizing the barriers that some may have and giving them the resources and acknowledgement to overcome these barriers. (“What is Health Equity? | Health Equity”).

- Must be approached at multiple levels
 - Systemic -- understanding health disparities and social determinants of health
 - Individual -- cultural competence
- Understanding the role of external and internal factors of people's lives is crucial to understanding and providing equitable health practices

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Health Disparities

Definition:

“Preventable differences that populations experience in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities” (“What is Health Equity? | Health Equity”).

- When people have less access to resources, they are more likely and prone to these extraneous burdens, widening a health gap between those with resources and those without.

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Social Determinants of Health

Definition:

“The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age.”
 (“What is Health Equity? | Health Equity”).

What are some examples of social determinants of health?

Figure 1

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment	Housing	Literacy	Hunger	Social integration	Health coverage
Income	Transportation	Language	Access to healthy options	Support systems	Provider availability
Expenses	Safety	Early childhood education		Community engagement	Provider linguistic and cultural competency
Debt	Parks	Vocational training		Discrimination	Quality of care
Medical bills	Playgrounds	Higher education		Stress	
Support	Walkability				
	Zip code / geography				

Health Outcomes

Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

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Cultural Competency

Definition:

Having the ability to understand and interact with people of different cultures and identities (Stubbe, 2020).

A practice that is being used for physicians to better approach health equity and improve their interactions with patients.

Part of cultural competency and health equity is understanding the barrier that the person **MIGHT** experience. Not everything learned about a certain demographic will apply to everyone that falls within that demographic. The important thing is having this knowledge and being **AWARE** that these barriers, disparities, and effectors of health exist and may deeply influence a person's experience with healthcare.

ACTIVITY

VOICES
OF
EQUITY

Jamboard!

Add a sticky note to one of the categories with a specific example of a health inequity or something that would influence someone's health.

Ex: assumption and dismissal of a young person's heart issue as anxiety and not a medical condition.



A teal geometric pattern consisting of white lines forming a series of interconnected triangles and polygons, resembling a stylized leaf or a modern mosaic, is visible in the background on the left and right sides of the slide.

So, *why* health equity?

At its most basic level, understanding inequities enables us to address them and improve health outcomes on every level, from individual to systemic.

It is imperative for healthcare professionals to learn about factors outside and within medical practice. This way, health care professionals can better help the patient through comprehending other factors that may be influencing their health without their own knowledge.

Healthcare, medicine, and health itself are not aspects that are void of culture and our experiences.

Works Cited

- Artiga, Samantha, and Elizabeth Hinton. “Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity.” *KFF*, 10 May 2018, <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>. Accessed 21 February 2025.
- Merschel, Michael. “What is health equity? How the idea grew – and why it matters.” *American Heart Association*, 24 April 2024, <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2024/04/24/what-is-health-equity-how-the-idea-grew-and-why-it-matters>. Accessed 19 February 2025.
- “What is Health Equity? | Health Equity.” *CDC*, 11 June 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/health-equity/what-is/index.html>. Accessed 19 February 2025.