1. Public health is an evidence-based field (it relies on the best available scientific research to draw conclusions, investigate risk factors and evaluate interventions). Yet public health is also inherently political. Drawing on course materials, explain why this is so and highlight some of the political tensions in modern public health practice.

Within the course material, there is an explanation by L.O. Gostin regarding public health and politics. Because there is nothing in the constitution that involves health, it is drawn from the 10th amendment (Gostin, 2000). When a subject is not explicitly sited as a federal government entity, the power rests with the states (Gostin, 2000). States in themselves are political and hold their own government over the state, and those state governments represent the community. We as the public vote, which is the way we communicate with the state government about what our wants and needs are. This is also how the government determines the focus of public health, which in turn also effects the health care system. If funding changes in one area of public health, it can also change the funding of state grants to shift these ideas to meet those wants and needs.

This can cause unrest between the state government and the public due to decisions that the public may not agree with or think is a problem we should be focusing on. This can create distrust of the government by the public, which can then lead to a reluctance to provide feedback (i.e., vote). It can go the other way as well, because so much happens behind the scenes within public health state government facilities. If we as public health professionals see that there is a real connection between vaccination and the reduction of serious illness (COVID-19 for example), we show this and bring it to the attention of the government. The public may not agree and may voice that to the government, which can lead to a reduction in funding for future vaccine and research grants.

1. Pop star Madonna has called Covid-19 "the great equalizer" stating, "It doesn't care about how rich you are, how famous you are, how funny you are, how smart you are, where you live, how old you are, what amazing stories you can tell."

Reviewing what you've learned about social and structural determinants and using concrete examples and evidence from the course to offer a critique of Madonna's assertion. In what ways does Covid-19 both reveal and exacerbate health inequities?

Within our course material regarding social and structural determinants of health, we talked about how medical conditions can affect how the course of COVID-19 may go for them. These medical conditions are disproportionate based on social and structural determinants. In Sarah Smarsh’s article, she talked about how a person’s social and structural determinants affect not just the first person living in it, but every generation thereafter (Smarsh, 2014). This is not limited to teeth, as lack of health access, lack of quality care, and high cost for those in lower-income neighborhoods can see their entire bodies affected by them. The article also discusses the wariness of wanting dental insurance due to the lack of coverage for dental issues (Smarsh, 2014). If only 2 cleanings a year are covered for free, but you are from an area or family where “poor teeth” are have continued throughout generations, you could be spending a massive amount of money from the 20-50% out-of-pocket cost of procedures you need (Smarsh, 2014).

Going back to COVID-19, our course materials also included a YouTube video regarding addressing racial health inequities during the pandemic. In this webinar, the panel discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light what has been an ongoing issue, that those who are from lower income areas and are not Caucasian are more likely to experience serious illness and death from COVID-19 (Pediatrics, 2020). This disparity is not limited to COVID-19 either, it encompasses not only illness. Women who are not Caucasian are also more likely to die during childbirth and experience birth complications. It is not fair for Madonna to say COVID-19 is equalizing when it ultimately showed that we continue to be racially inequal in health and all of society.

# References

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