Concepts in Health Equity
LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Description
Health equity is the attainment of the highest possible level of health, regardless of sex, gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion, culture, language, disability or socioeconomic status. Barriers to achieving health equity such as sociocultural factors and structural and institutional inequities can result in poor patient health outcomes, increased healthcare spending and worsening oral health disparities.

In the following activities students will learn health equity terminology, understand the role that social determinants of health and structural and institutional inequities plays in the development of oral health disparities and identify groups most affected by oral health disparities.

Competencies

- C1.1. Health Equity
  - Define the following terms: health, population health, health indicator, health (in)equity, health (in)equality, health disparities and social determinants of health.
  - Express attitude that eliminating health inequities is important for population health.
  - Identify common health disparities and social determinants of health among subpopulations (e.g. race/ethnicity, poverty status and residence).
  - Describe barriers to health equity.
  - Express attitude that acknowledging aversive racism (unconscious bias), intuitional and structural racism is important for the quality of oral health service delivery and to address health equity.

Learning Outcomes
- Define and describe the following terms: health, population health, health (in)equity, health (in)equality, health disparity, social determinant of health and health indicator.
- Analyze specific factors that contribute to or eliminate oral health disparities.
- Identify groups that are most affected by oral health disparities.
- Evaluate how oral health disparities impact people in the community.
Activity 1: Introduction to Health Equity

Instructor delivers didactic lecture on health equity terminology, conceptual models and case examples. Students watch videos and complete assigned reading to enhance their understanding of health equity.

Introductory videos

- Dr. David R. Williams: The Social Factors of Health. TEDTALKS.
- Allegories on race and racism by Camara Jones. TEDTALKS.
- The Bigger Picture: Change the Conversation about Diabetes.
- PBS Frontline: Dollars and Dentists.
- PBS Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making us Sick?

Assigned reading


Group discussion

In groups, students respond to the following questions:

1. What were some health disparities discussed in these videos and readings?
2. What were factors that contribute to these health disparities?
3. How do inequalities shape health behavior, health outcomes and life expectancy?
Activity 2: Analyze Determinants of Oral Health

Students will have an in-depth discussion on factors affecting community access to dental care. Students will break out in small groups and select one factor (i.e. health behaviors, geography, financing care and utilization, oral health literacy, health status, workforce, safety net and socioeconomic status) from the ADA’s Access to Oral Health Care Framework (found in the American Dental Association (2011). Breaking Down Barriers to Oral Health for All Americans: Barriers to Oral Health Care) to explore. Ideally, there will be at least 8 small groups so that each factor from the report will be discussed.

The instructor will facilitate a larger group discussion by having smaller groups report out on the factor that they discussed.

Suggested readings to prepare for the discussions:


Activity 3: Health Equity versus Equality

Analyze health equity versus equality graphics

Students will review the following health equity graphics and provide a critique. What did you like? What did you not like? If time permits, students may develop their own health equity graphic.


Activity 4: The Last Straw

Last Straw Board Game

Promote discussion about the social determinants of health by playing The Last Straw! Board game. The game is an educational tool designed to:

- Foster discussion about the social determinants of health.
- Create awareness of and empathy towards marginalized people.
- Encourage critical thinking.
Players develop character profiles and move through life stages during which they encounter environmental, economic and family issues. Players gain and lose chips based on community and personal scenarios and the person with the most chips at the end of the game wins.

The Last Straw! (© 2007 Kate Reeve and Kate Rossiter) is easy to facilitate. Training videos are available and provides players with a participatory learning environment. The board game can be purchased at The Last Straw!

**Student Assessment**

- Quiz on health equity terminology and concepts
- Level of participation in group discussion and activity

**Resources**

**Books**


**Definitions**

- Healthy People 2020: *Disparities*.
- Healthy People 2020: *Social Determinants of Health*. 
Health Equity Plans

- Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII) (2015).

Additional Resources

- Health Equity. Minnesota Department of Health.
- World Health Organization, Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2019). *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) (December 4, 2018). *Health Equity*.
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). *Roots of Health Inequity*.
- Health Equity. PolicyLink.

**Suggested Placement within Curriculum**

Students should experience these learning activities early within any healthcare curriculum to provide a foundation on which to build knowledge, establish values and foster clinical application. Consider incorporating many of the above listed health equity resources as you advance to other HRSA Resource Library Learning Activities.