History of Diverse Populations and Health

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Description
Several population groups in the United States have a history of discrimination and oppression, which persists today in the form of structural and institutional barriers to financial stability, education, employment, housing, dental care and health care. In order to deliver patient-centered, culturally appropriate dental and health care services, professionals must understand the history and lived experiences of diverse population groups.

Competencies
  - C1.1. Health Equity
    - 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.
    - Summarize basic national and state population demographics, health and oral health statistics and trends for the following groups: sex, gender, identification, age, race/ethnicity, poverty, insurance status, disability status, nationality, health literacy and Limited English Proficiency.
    - Evaluate literature on health disparities, health inequities, and social determinants of health.
    - Discuss the history of sex, gender identity, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, disability and socioeconomic status and its impact on health.
- C3. Administration and Management Practices
  - Create a demographic, cultural and epidemiological community profile and conduct a needs assessment for the system/organization service area.
  - Apply guidance documents and benchmarks (e.g. National and State Health Literacy Action Plans, Healthy People Goals and Objectives, National and State Oral Health Literacy Plan, and Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors guidance documents) to system and organization strategic and quality improvement plans and monitor changes.
Learning Outcomes

- Develop a demographic profile of a select population group.
- Identify common health issues in the select population group.
- Analyze the population’s history, culture, structural and institutional barriers and other social determinants of health that contribute to these health issues.
- Ascertain community strengths and opportunities that could contribute to good health and improving health outcomes.
- Reflect on information learned from the select population group and what this means for clinical practice.

Activity 1

Students work in small groups and select one diverse population group to research and present findings to the classroom. The population group should be a group within the state the student intends on practicing in and may include any of the following: African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Hmong, Somali, Karen, Lesbian, Older Adults, Women, People with Disabilities, People with Limited English Proficiency, Rural Residents, Low-Income/Poverty, or Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT). Each small group should select a different population group so that students benefit from peer-to-peer learning.

Students should also be encouraged to attend conferences, cultural museums and events or connect with community organizations to learn more. Students will address the following in their presentation:

- **Demographic profile.** This includes group enumeration or percent of the total population and other relevant statistics in the United States and one selected state. The state selected could be the state where the class is being taught or where students will be practicing upon graduation.
- **Health status.** What is the overall health status of this population? Is there public health data and surveillance or studies on this population that show which diseases are most prevalent in this population? What social determinants of health contribute to these health outcomes?
- **History.** Briefly describe the history of this population group in the United States and selected state.
- **Structural and institutional barriers.** Describe structural or institutional barriers that contribute to poor health outcomes. For example, are there policies or practices in place that hinder opportunities for good health?
- **Cultural barriers.** Are there cultural beliefs or practices that might contribute to poor health?
- **Opportunities and strengths.** Describe group cultural strengths that contribute to good health or where opportunities might exist to improve health.
• **Relevance to clinical practice.** Taking all of the above information into account, reflect on how this relates to clinical practice. For example, how might the social determinants of health and life experiences affect members of this group from going to clinic appointments or managing their health care? Are there certain verbal or non-verbal communication styles you need to be mindful of when working with a patient from this diverse group?

**Student Assessment**

Students work in small groups and select one diverse population group to research and present findings to the classroom. Using a scoring sheet, either instructor and/or classroom can grade the presentation.

**Resources**

- National Oral Health Surveillance System
- Minnesota Oral Health Surveillance System
- Healthy People Oral Health Objectives

**Suggested Placement within Curriculum**

Ideally, this group learning activity should be placed early within the dental or health-related curriculum. Ample project time is necessary for completion of the population research to allow for inclusion of experiential or first-hand population engagement. Having this foundation of knowledge on diverse populations prior to providing clinical patient care will enhance forthcoming patient-clinician interaction, health equity practices and health care outcomes.