

# What is Health Equity? Addressing Health Disparities

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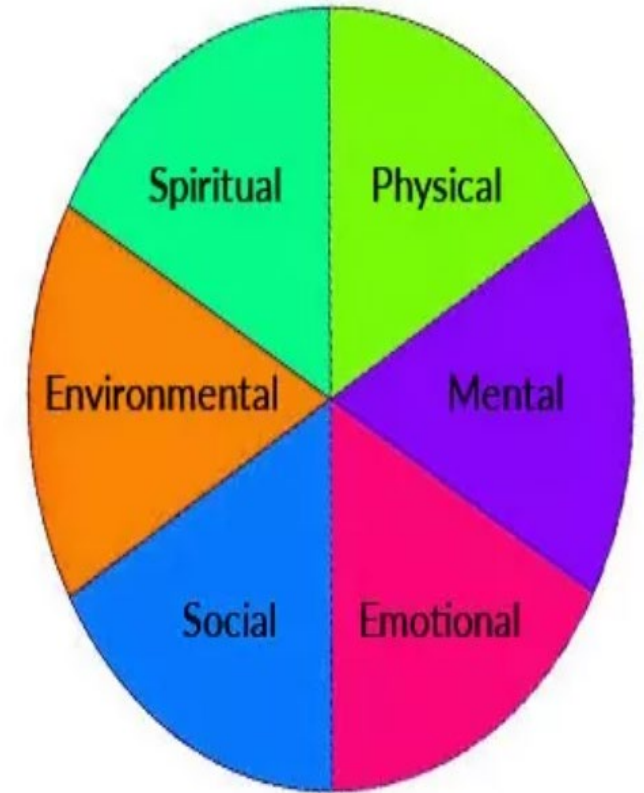
# Objectives:

- Discuss the definition of health and the determinants of health
- Define health disparities and health inequities
- Discuss health equity and how it differs from health equality
- Understand the importance of achieving health equity
- Discuss strategies for providing patient care through a health equity lens

# What is Health?

- Defined as the state of being free from illness or injury
- A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being – World Health Organization (WHO)
- A state of optimal well-being that allows individuals to live fulfilling and meaningful lives

## Types of Health



Stoewen DL. Dimensions of wellness: Change your habits, change your life. Can Vet J. 2017 Aug;58(8):861-862. PMID: 28761196; PMCID: PMC5508938. World Health Organization. Accessed at <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>. 2024

**What Determines your Health?**

# Discussion Questions

1. Why might someone skip doctor appointments?
2. How often do you go outside? Do you think this affects your health?
3. How far do you have to travel from your home to find a store that sells affordable fresh vegetables, meat, and fruit? Could you get there on foot or by public transportation if you needed to? Use an online map if you need help.

# Health Determinants: Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

- Conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks



Childhood experiences



Housing



Education



Social support



Family income



Employment



Our communities



Access to health services



## Health Determinants: SDOH

- Depends on the interaction of the person with their environment
  - Positive interactions result in health or maintenance of health
  - Negative interactions result in disability and disease
- Internal factors—characteristics of the individual
  - May be inherited or learned
  - May be physical, social, psychological, or behavioral, etc
- External factors—characteristics of the community where the individual lives and works
  - May be physical, social, economic etc

# Health Determinants: SDOH

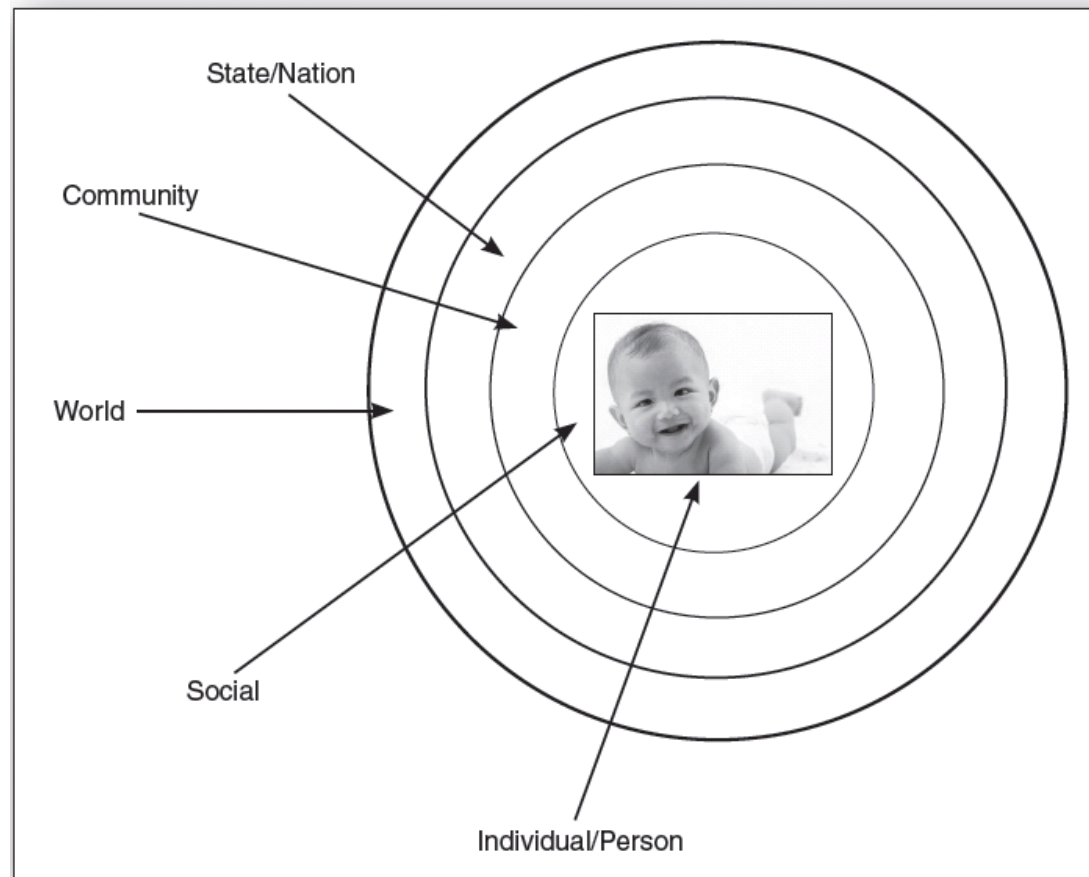
Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment	Housing	Literacy	Hunger	Social integration	Health coverage
Income	Transportation	Language	Access to healthy options	Support systems	Provider availability
Expenses	Safety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

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

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Accessed at <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>. 2024  
 Henry Kaiser Family Foundation



# Framework for Describing Health Determinants



# What are the Numbers?

- Nearly nine out of 10 adults lack the skills needed to fully manage their health care and prevent disease
- 1.2 million people living HIV
- 1.56 million people used an emergency shelter or a transitional program
  - 44% of homeless people were employed
- 1 in 5 adults experiencing mental illnesses
- 6 in 10 adults live with a chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes
- 46 million adults are 65 years and older
- Number of adults with hearing trouble: 37.1 million
- Number of adults with vision trouble: 22 million
- Number of adults unable (or very difficult) to walk a quarter mile: 17 million
- Number of adults with any physical functioning difficulty: 36 million
- 28.5% of Louisiana's 4.6 million residents live in rural areas

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/datastatistics/index.html>. 2024

# Health Disparities versus Health Inequities?

- A health disparity is defined as “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage
  - Healthy People 2030
- Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion
- Health equity affects:
  - Length of life
  - Quality of life
  - Rates of disease, disability, and death
  - Severity of disease
  - Access to treatment
- Health inequities are differences in health that are systemically rooted; they are unnecessary and avoidable

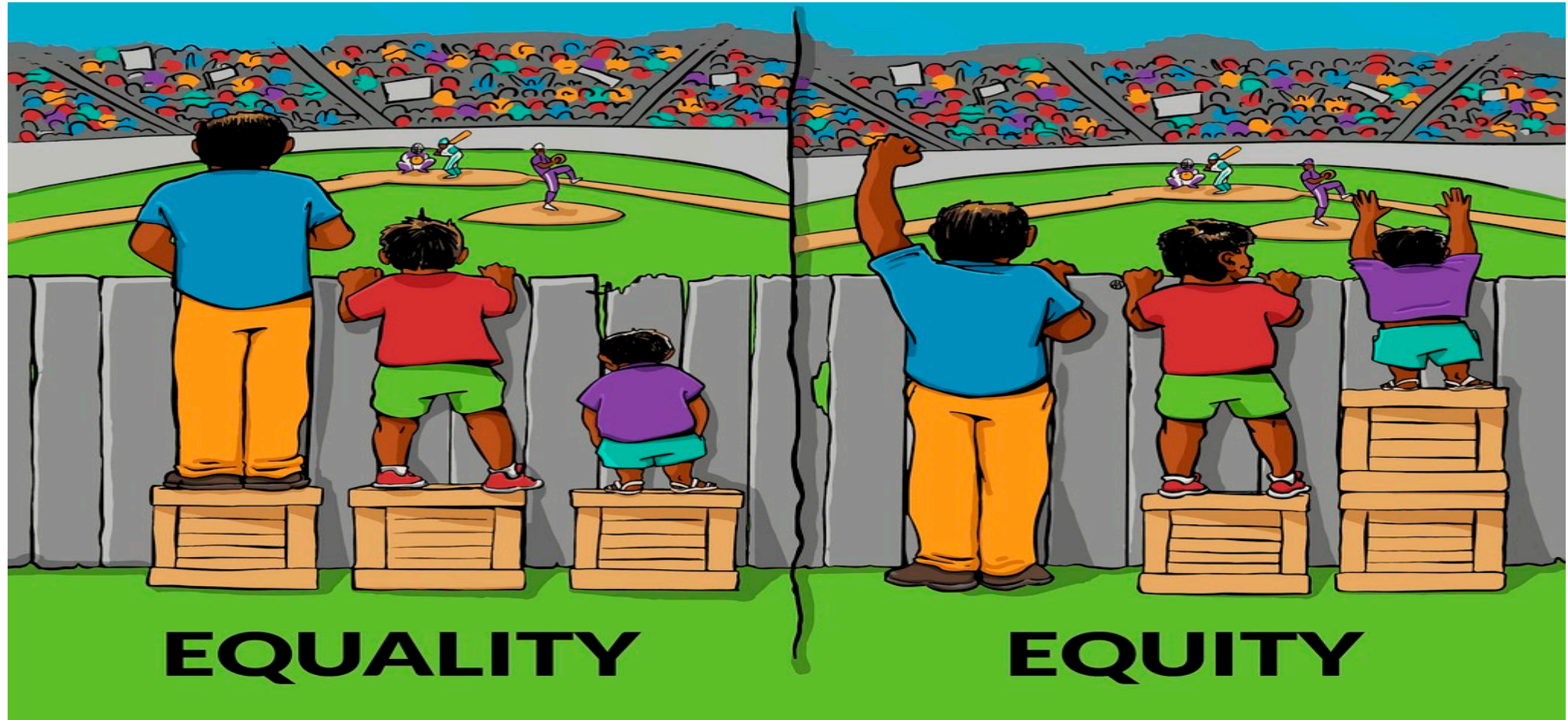
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Accessed at <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-equity-healthy-people-2030>. 2024

Common Health Action. Accessed at <https://commonhealthaction.org/>. 2024

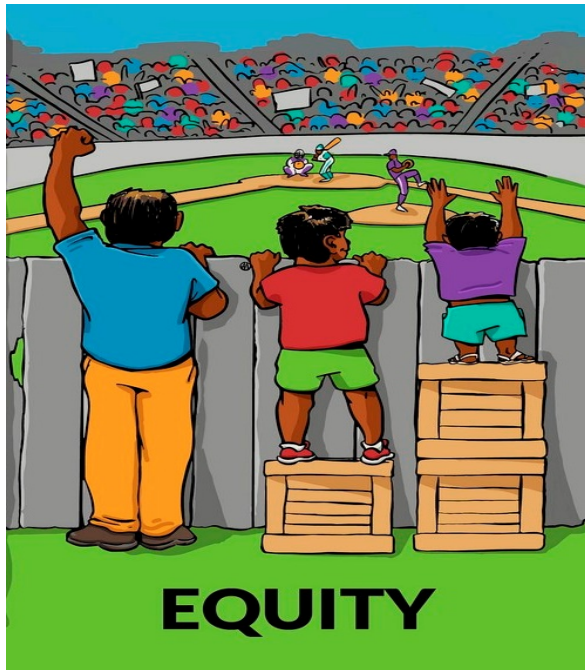




# Health Equity versus Health Equality



# Importance of Achieving Health Equity



- Health equity is a matter of human rights and social justice
  - Every individual has the right to attain their highest level of health without facing discrimination or barriers based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geography
- Achieving health equity is essential for improving overall public health outcomes
- Ensures that all individuals have access to timely and appropriate healthcare services, thus reducing healthcare costs, enhancing workforce productivity, and stimulating economic growth
- Contributes to social cohesion and well-being by fostering inclusive and cohesive communities, thus creating healthier, more resilient communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive
- \*\*Healthcare providers have a moral responsibility to advocate for equitable access to healthcare and to address the social determinants of health that contribute to disparities

**How Can You Provide Patient  
Care through a Health Equity  
Lens?**

# Patient Care through a Health Equity Lens

- Cultural Competence: Understanding and respecting patients' diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and practices
  - Actively listening to patients, acknowledging their perspectives, and adapting care plans to meet their cultural needs
- Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Recognizing the impact of social and economic factors on health outcomes and addressing them in patient care
  - Connecting patients with community resources for housing, food security, transportation, and financial assistance
- Reducing Barriers to Access: Ensuring equitable access to healthcare services for all patients, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or geographic location
  - Offering flexible appointment scheduling, providing interpretation services, or implementing telehealth options for patients in underserved areas



# Patient Care through a Health Equity Lens

- **Advocating for Policy Change:** Advocating for policies and initiatives that promote health equity at the local, state, and national levels
  - Supporting initiatives to expand Medicaid coverage, increase funding for community health centers, or address disparities in healthcare workforce diversity
- **Mitigating Implicit Bias:** Recognizing and addressing implicit bias in clinical practice to ensure fair and unbiased treatment of all patients
  - Participating in bias awareness training, implementing standardized protocols for decision-making, and regularly reflecting on personal biases and assumptions
- **Promoting Health Literacy:** Communicating health information in a clear, understandable manner and empowering patients to make informed decisions about their care
  - Using plain language, visual aids, and teach-back techniques to ensure patients understand their diagnoses, treatment options, and self-care instructions

# Patient Care through a Health Equity Lens

- Engaging in Community Partnerships: Collaborating with community organizations, public health agencies, and local stakeholders to address health disparities and improve population health outcomes
  - Participating in community health fairs, supporting health education initiatives, and advocating for resources to address social determinants of health
- Monitoring and Evaluating Outcomes: Tracking and evaluating health outcomes by demographic factors to identify disparities and assess the effectiveness of interventions
  - Collecting and analyzing data on patient demographics, healthcare utilization, and health outcomes to inform quality improvement efforts and resource allocation decisions

# Conclusion and Call to Action

- Key Takeaway points:
  - Understanding health equity is crucial for healthcare providers to recognize and address disparities in healthcare access, quality, and outcomes
  - Disparities in healthcare are multifaceted and recognizing these disparities is the first step toward promoting equitable care delivery
  - Promoting equitable care involves implementing proactive strategies such as culturally competent care, addressing social determinants of health, advocating for policy change, and reducing implicit bias in clinical practice
  - Achieving health equity requires collaboration and commitment from healthcare providers, community organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders

# Thank You!

