

# **The Nursing Workforces' Role in Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Advancing Health Equity: Why a Diverse Workforce is Needed**

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# Data From 2013-2017 Found That Nursing in the United States Does Not Reflect the Country's Racial and Gender Diversity<sup>1</sup>



**90%**

**FEMALE**

**80%**

**WHITE**

***“The decade ahead will demand a stronger, more diversified nursing workforce that is prepared to provide care; promote health and well-being among nurses, individuals, and communities; and address the systemic inequities that have fueled wide and persistent health disparities”*** (NASEM, 2021)

Figure 1

# Social Determinants of Health

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

## Health Outcomes

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

- **When White folks catch a cold, Black folks get pneumonia**

## **Health Care Disparities**

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health disparities as:

Differences in health outcomes that are closely linked with social, economic, and environmental disadvantage — are often driven by the social conditions in which individuals live, learn, work and play

# What does this have to do with Nursing

- **Nursing has a sacred societal obligation to take care of everybody with the same level of human dignity and compassion**
  - **We can only do this by being representative of the society in which we have been called to serve**
- **Racism manifest in healthcare through health disparities**
- **Nursing is well positioned to directly impact health disparities, and work to increase health equity**
- **Nursing must put forth aggressive plans to diversify the profession on all levels**



# Moving Toward Health Equity

- **Definitions of Health Equity**

- “**Health equity** is the state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full **health** potential, and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other **socially defined** circumstance” (NASEM, 2017)
- “**Health equity** is defined as the absence of unfair and avoidable or remediable differences in **health** among population groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically” (WHO, 2020)



# Health Equity

Dr. Camara  
Jones (2014)

Health Equity: Assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people

Three principles to achieve health equity:

- Providing resources according to need
- Valuing all individuals and populations equally
- Recognizing and rectifying historical injustices





"THE BEAUTY OF

## ANTIRACISM

IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO PRETEND  
TO BE FREE OF RACISM TO BE AN  
ANTI-RACIST. ANTIRACISM IS THE  
COMMITMENT TO FIGHT RACISM  
WHEREVER YOU FIND IT,  
INCLUDING IN YOURSELF.  
AND IT'S THE ONLY WAY FORWARD."

IJSOMA OLUO

- **Achieving HEALTH EQUITY**  
*is not possible without:*
- Confronting structural and institutional RACISM
- Embracing ANTIRACISM Initiatives

# The Nursing Determinants of Health

- **No other healthcare profession interacts with patients more than nursing**
  - Each interaction is an **OPPORTUNITY**
- **Nursing is everywhere in our healthcare system**
  - Ideally placed to confront structural and institutional racism
  - Ideally situated to lead antiracism initiatives
- **Nursing is morally and ethically obligated to provide equitable care to everybody regardless of their demographic characteristics**
- **Nursing can impact directly healthcare disparities and the SDH**



# The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity

- **Vision**

- The achievement of health equity in the United States built on strengthened nursing capacity and expertise

- **Health Equity achieved through ten desired Nursing Outcomes**

- Nurses are prepared to act individually, through teams, and across sectors to meet challenges associated with an aging population, access to primary care, mental and behavioral health problems, structural racism, high maternal mortality and morbidity, and **elimination of the disproportionate disease burden carried by specific segments of the U.S. population**
- **Nurses reflect the people and communities served throughout the nation, helping to ensure that individuals receive culturally competent, equitable health care services**
- Health care systems enable and support nurses to tailor care to meet the specific medical and social needs of **diverse patients to optimize their health**



# The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity

- **Nursing Roles and Leadership**

- Conclusion 9-4: Nurse leaders have a **responsibility** to address structural racism, cultural racism, and discrimination based on identity (e.g., sexual orientation, gender), place (e.g., rural, urban), and circumstances (e.g., disabled, mental health condition) **within the nursing profession** and to help build structures and systems at the societal level that address these issues to promote health equity

- **Recommendation 9:**

- The National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Administration for Children and Families, the Administration for Community Living, and private associations and foundations should convene representatives from nursing, public health, and health care **to develop and support a research agenda and evidence base** describing the impact of nursing interventions, including multisector collaboration, on social determinants of health, environmental health, health equity, and nurses' health and well-being



# Conclusion: With a Diverse Nursing Workforce

- **Patients generally fare better when care is provided by a more diverse team**
- **Professional skills-focused studies generally find improvements to innovation, team communications and improved risk assessment**
- **Financial performance also improved with increased diversity**
- **Creates diversity-friendly environments that are key to avoiding frictions that come with change**



# References / Resources

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