Social determinants of health: Bridging inequities through public health strategies.

Giuseppe Vukovic*

Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Iran

Description

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) encompass the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, profoundly influencing health outcomes and disparities. Factors such as socioeconomic status, education, housing, employment, and access to healthcare collectively shape individual and community well-being. Addressing these determinants is central to reducing health inequities and improving overall population health. Public health strategies aimed at bridging these gaps are increasingly recognized as essential components of equitable healthcare systems.

Economic stability is another key determinant, as poverty is strongly linked to poor health outcomes. People with limited financial resources often face barriers to accessing nutritious food, safe housing, and quality healthcare. Strategies such as increasing the minimum wage, expanding job training programs, and providing financial assistance for basic needs can alleviate these challenges. Additionally, targeted interventions like subsidized healthcare or free vaccination campaigns can ensure that vulnerable populations receive essential care.

Access to safe and affordable housing significantly impacts physical and mental health. Overcrowded or substandard housing conditions can lead to the spread of infectious diseases, exposure to environmental hazards, and increased stress levels. Public health policies that prioritize affordable housing, homelessness prevention programs, and safe urban planning can mitigate these risks and promote healthier communities.

Healthcare accessibility remains a cornerstone in bridging inequities. Geographic, financial, and systemic barriers often prevent underserved populations from obtaining timely care. Expanding healthcare coverage through universal health systems, establishing mobile health clinics, and investing in telemedicine are strategies that improve access, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Addressing structural racism and discrimination is also vital, as marginalized communities often face inequitable treatment within healthcare systems. Culturally competent care, implicit bias training for providers, and inclusive policy development are critical to overcoming these barriers.

Public health strategies targeting SDOH are essential to bridging health inequities. By addressing education, economic stability, housing, and healthcare access, and by promoting equity-focused policies, public health systems can create healthier, more inclusive communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

***Correspondence to:** Giuseppe Vukovic, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Iran; E-mail: vukovic@iaz.ir.com

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