

# Addressing health disparities and inequities: A call for equity in healthcare.

Ryan Brent\*

School of Nursing, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

## Introduction

Health disparities and inequities continue to be a pressing issue in the field of healthcare, affecting communities worldwide. These disparities refer to differences in health outcomes, access to healthcare services, and health determinants, often stemming from social, economic, and environmental factors. They result in certain populations experiencing poorer health and reduced life expectancy compared to others. Tackling health disparities and promoting equity in healthcare is not only a matter of justice but also a critical aspect of public health [1].

Health disparities manifest in numerous ways, such as differences in disease prevalence, mortality rates, and access to healthcare. These disparities often correlate with factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic location. For instance, in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities have historically faced higher rates of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. These disparities extend globally, with low-income countries experiencing more significant challenges in providing healthcare access and managing diseases. Several factors contribute to health disparities and inequities. Socioeconomic status plays a crucial role. People with lower incomes often struggle to access quality healthcare due to financial barriers, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Education and employment opportunities also influence health outcomes, as those with better education and employment prospects tend to enjoy better health.

Furthermore, racial and ethnic disparities persist due to systemic racism and discrimination. These factors lead to inequalities in health determinants, such as housing, nutrition, and access to safe environments, which ultimately affect health outcomes. Discrimination within the healthcare system itself can also exacerbate disparities, as it may lead to unequal treatment, misdiagnoses, and poorer quality of care for marginalized communities. The consequences of health disparities are far-reaching and devastating. On an individual level, they result in increased morbidity and mortality rates. People from disadvantaged backgrounds often face shorter life expectancies and a higher burden of chronic diseases. Communities experiencing health disparities also grapple with lower quality of life, decreased economic productivity, and increased healthcare costs [2].

Moreover, these disparities contribute to an inefficient healthcare system. Preventable hospitalizations, increased emergency room visits, and prolonged treatment periods all place a significant financial burden on healthcare systems. These inefficiencies affect not only those directly affected by disparities but also society as a whole, leading to higher healthcare costs and reduced resources for other public health initiatives. Addressing health disparities and promoting health equity is a complex but vital endeavor. Several strategies can help mitigate these disparities and improve the overall health of vulnerable populations [3].

Expanding access to healthcare services is a fundamental step in reducing health disparities. This can be achieved through measures like expanding Medicaid, increasing the number of healthcare providers in underserved areas, and offering financial assistance to low-income individuals for healthcare coverage. Raising awareness about the impact of health disparities and providing health education to marginalized communities is essential. This can empower individuals to take control of their health and make informed decisions.

Healthcare providers must receive cultural competence training to better understand the unique needs and challenges of diverse patient populations. Culturally sensitive care can help bridge the gap in healthcare quality. Addressing economic disparities is crucial. Policies that promote employment opportunities, access to education, and housing stability can contribute to better health outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Accurate data collection and research are essential to identify and track health disparities. Ongoing research can shed light on the root causes of disparities and inform evidence-based interventions [4].

Governments and healthcare organizations must implement policies that prioritize health equity. This includes measures to combat systemic racism, promote social determinants of health, and ensure healthcare affordability for all. Community-based programs and outreach efforts can play a significant role in addressing health disparities. These initiatives often involve local organizations, leaders, and healthcare providers working together to improve health outcomes in underserved communities [5].

## Conclusion

In conclusion, health disparities and inequities persist as a significant challenge in the global healthcare landscape.

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\*Corresponding Author: Ryan Brent, School of Nursing, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA. Email: [brentR@email.unc.edu](mailto:brentR@email.unc.edu)

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These disparities have far-reaching consequences, impacting the health and well-being of vulnerable populations while also straining healthcare systems and economies. As societies move forward, it is essential to recognize that achieving health equity is not only a matter of social justice but also a fundamental component of public health. By working collectively to eliminate health disparities, we can create a more equitable and healthier world for all.

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