THE TALE OF TWO PANDEMICS: SYSTEMIC RACISM + COVID-19

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Factors of where people live, learn, work and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes

- Housing
- Employment
- Income
- Education
- Neighborhood
  - Characteristics and location
- Access
HEALTH EQUITY AND HEALTH DISPARITIES

• **Health equity** – When everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

• **Health disparities** – Differences in health outcomes and their causes among groups of people.

• When we look we look at life expectancy and infant mortality (two common indicators of the health equity of a country or community), we see that it has improved in the U.S.

• Disproportionate burden of preventable diseases, death and disability among minority groups when compared to non-minorities.
COVID-19 + RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

• What the COVID-19 pandemic did is shine a bright light on what always existed – the pandemic that is systemic racism.
  • Two pandemics in one.
• We are still in the midst of this and collecting data and adjusting our learnings as we go.
• Current COVID-19 data suggests disproportionate burden of illness and disease among racial and ethnic minority groups.
  • Trend of health inequities with many other health outcomes:
    • Black women are 2–6 times more likely to die from complications of pregnancy.
    • Native Americans and Alaska Natives have an infant mortality rate that is 60% higher.
    • Black men are twice as likely as whites to die prematurely from stroke
33% hospitalized patients were Black, compared to 18% of community.

COVID-19 deaths data from New York City from April 16

- Death rate per 100,000 population
  - 92.3 Black
  - 74.3 Latinx (all races)
  - 45.2 White
  - 34.5 Asian
Navajo Nation with population of around 175,000 over three states

- 3,100+ cases (mid-May)
  - Rate of 18 per 1,000
  - At least 100 deaths

- Systemically disenfranchised by U.S. government
- Densely populated
- Limited access
  - Medical personnel and hospitals
  - Food insecurity
- Inadequate health and social services
- Limited reliable electricity
- Prevention methods particularly challenging in this context
  - Densely populated
  - 1/3 homes do not have running water
  - Isolation is both physically and culturally challenging
WHAT IS AT THE ROOT?

• Society was built that way
  • Health differences between racial groups are often due to economic and social conditions – **social determinants of health**.
  • During public health emergencies, the emergency can further isolate certain people from the resources they need to prepare for and respond to the crisis.
WHERE DO I BEGIN?

- Don't be afraid to be wrong
- BIPOC people do not owe you
- Do the work
- Get uncomfortable
- What is your contribution?
- Use your privilege
- Destroy the myth
- How you spend your money matters?
- Amplify
- Listen to people who are actively organizing
- Advocate
- Vote

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DO YOUR PART TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

- Practice good hygiene
  - Wash your hands
  - Avoid touching your face
  - Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow
  - Disinfect frequently
- Wear face covers in public
  - Not for children under 2 or anyone who has significant trouble with face covers
  - Do not use a face mask meant for healthcare workers
- Continue physical distancing
- Avoid unnecessary travel
- If you feel sick, stay home. If your children feel sick, keep them at home.

Listen and follow direction of your state and local authorities.