
Health Reform and Health Equity: Sharing Responsibility for Health in the United States

New Directions in American Health Care
A Hofstra Cultural Center Conference

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Social Inequalities in Health

- Differences in health by social class, race, geographic region
 - Persistent
 - Significant
 - Growing
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Health disparities within the United States
are “enormous by all international
standards”

Murray CJL, *et al.* “Eight Americas: Investigating mortality disparities across race, counties, and race-counties in the United States,” *PLoS Medicine* 2006;3 (9):e260 (0001-0012).

U.S. Health *Care* Reform

- Universal access to quality primary care
 - Necessary but insufficient
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Health Equity Abroad

- WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health
 - ❑ Childhood health and development
 - ❑ Healthy workplaces and neighborhoods
 - ❑ Social safety net across life course
 - ❑ Intersectoral action (HIA)
 - ❑ Political empowerment
 - ❑ Gender equity
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Examples of Leadership

- England
- Canada



Personal Responsibility for Health

- Role
 - Causal
 - Liability
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Social Responsibility for Health

- Inequalities regardless of behavior
 - Social conditions shape behavior
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Shared Responsibility for Health

- Rejection of binary models
 - Enhanced effectiveness and equity
 - Respect and recognition
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U.S. Health Policy Experiments

- Personal and punitive
 - Collaborative and progressive
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*Thank you Hofstra Cultural Center
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