

Unnatural Causes

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UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?

A seven-part documentary series exploring racial & socioeconomic inequalities in health.

Produced by the California Newsreel and Presented by the National Minority Consortia in Partnership with the National Association of County and City Health Officials

Unnatural Causes

UNNATURAL CAUSES is the acclaimed documentary series broadcast by PBS and now used by thousands of organizations around the country to tackle the root causes of our alarming socio-economic and racial inequities in health.

- **In Sickness and In Wealth** How does the distribution of power, wealth and resources shape opportunities for health?
- **When the Bough Breaks** Can racism become embedded in the body and affect birth outcomes?
- **Becoming American** Latino immigrants arrive healthy, so why don't they stay that way?
- **Bad Sugar** What are the connections between diabetes, oppression, and empowerment in two Native American communities?
- **Place Matters** Why is your street address such a strong predictor of your health?
- **Collateral Damage** How do Marshall Islanders pay for globalization and U.S. military policy with their health?
- **Not Just a Paycheck** Why do layoffs take such a huge toll in Michigan but cause hardly a ripple in Sweden?

Unnatural Causes: A Public Health Framework

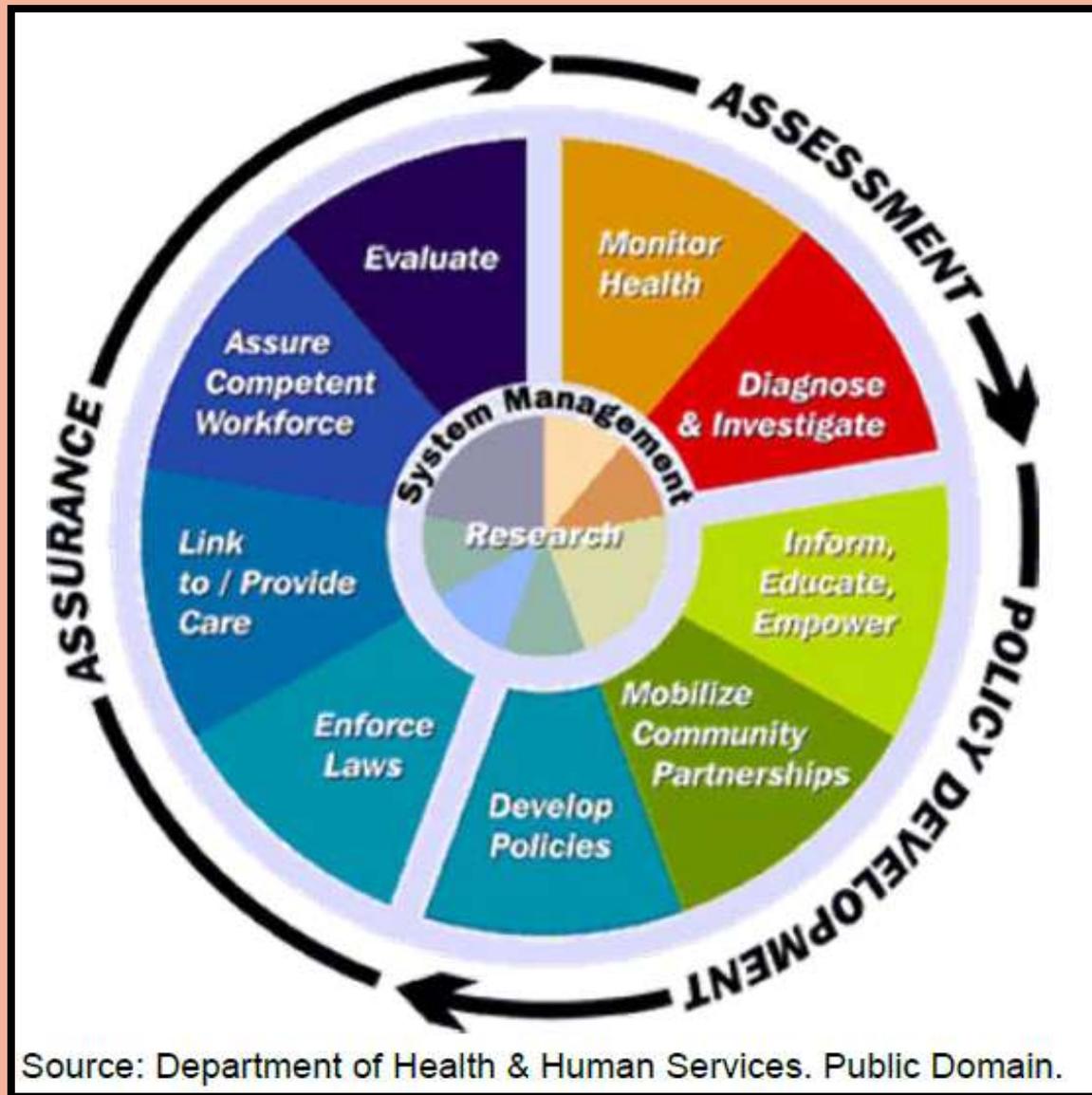
- **What is health?**
- **What is public health?**



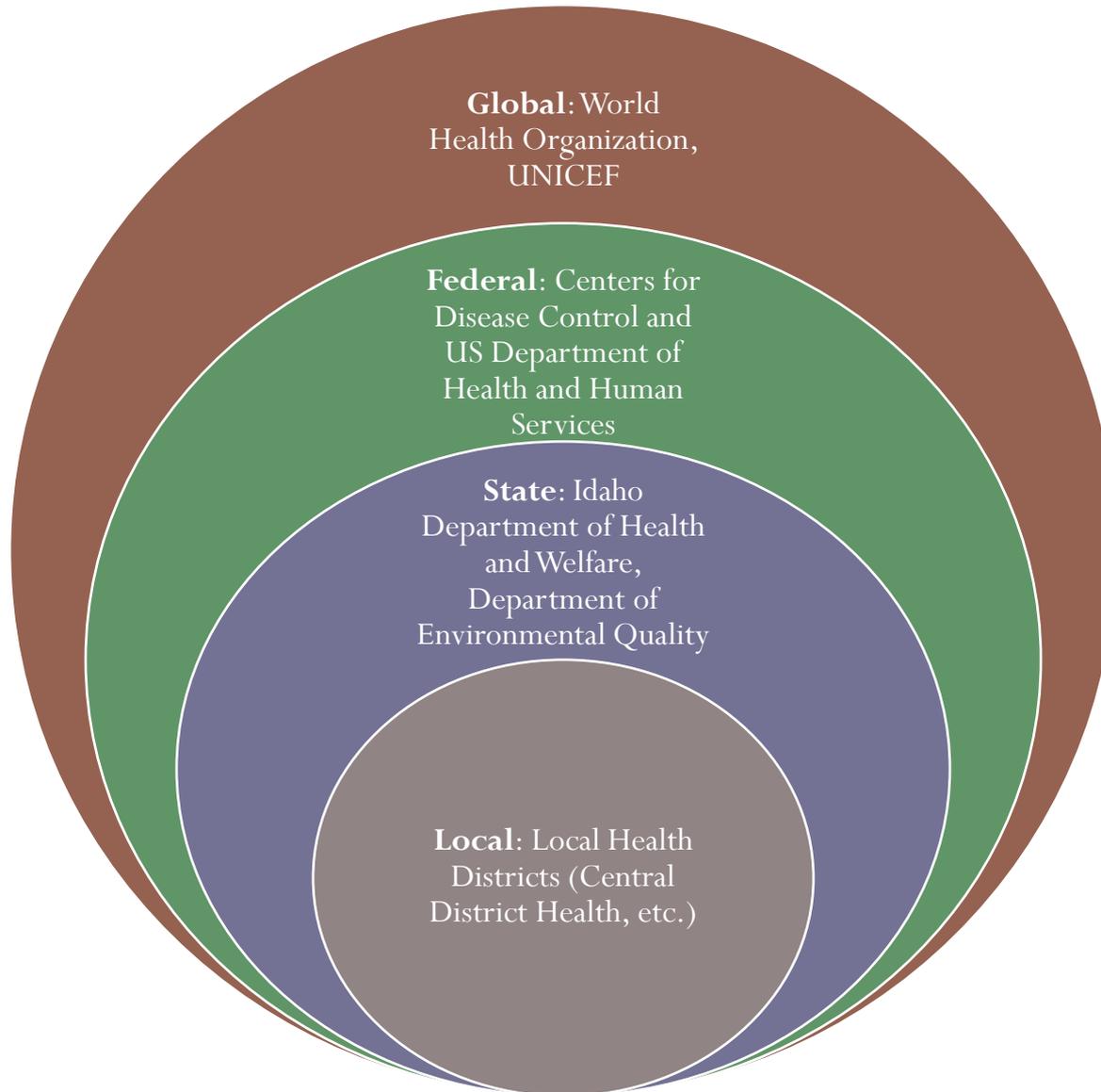
Prevent, Protect, Promote

- Public Health Core Functions
 - Assessment: Surveillance of disease/injury; monitoring trends; analyzing causes; and identifying needs (Research)
 - Policy Development: Broad community involvement; promote scientific basis of decision-making; strategic approach; development of comprehensive public health policies (Policy)
 - Assurance: Seeing to the implementation of legislative mandates as well as fulfilling statutory responsibilities and provision of safety net services for the most vulnerable populations (Practice)

Essential Public Health Services



Public Health Agencies



Public Health Components

- Epidemiology
- Biostatistics
- Environmental Health
- Health Services Administration
- Social & Behavioral Science
- Informatics
- Genomics
- Communication
- Cultural Competence
- Community-based Participatory Research
- Policy & Law
- Global Health
- Ethics

Public Health Pyramids

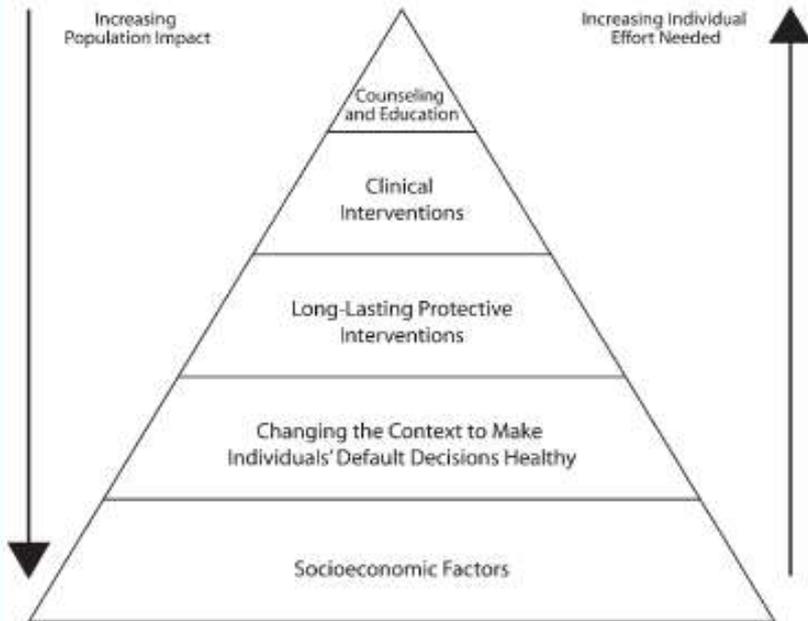
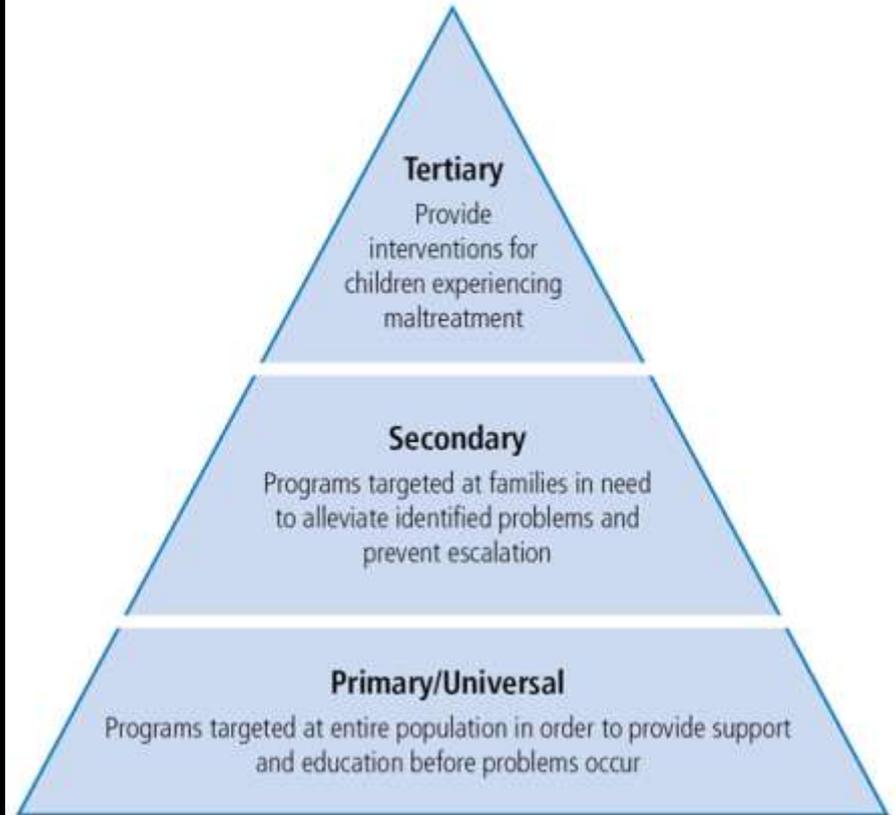
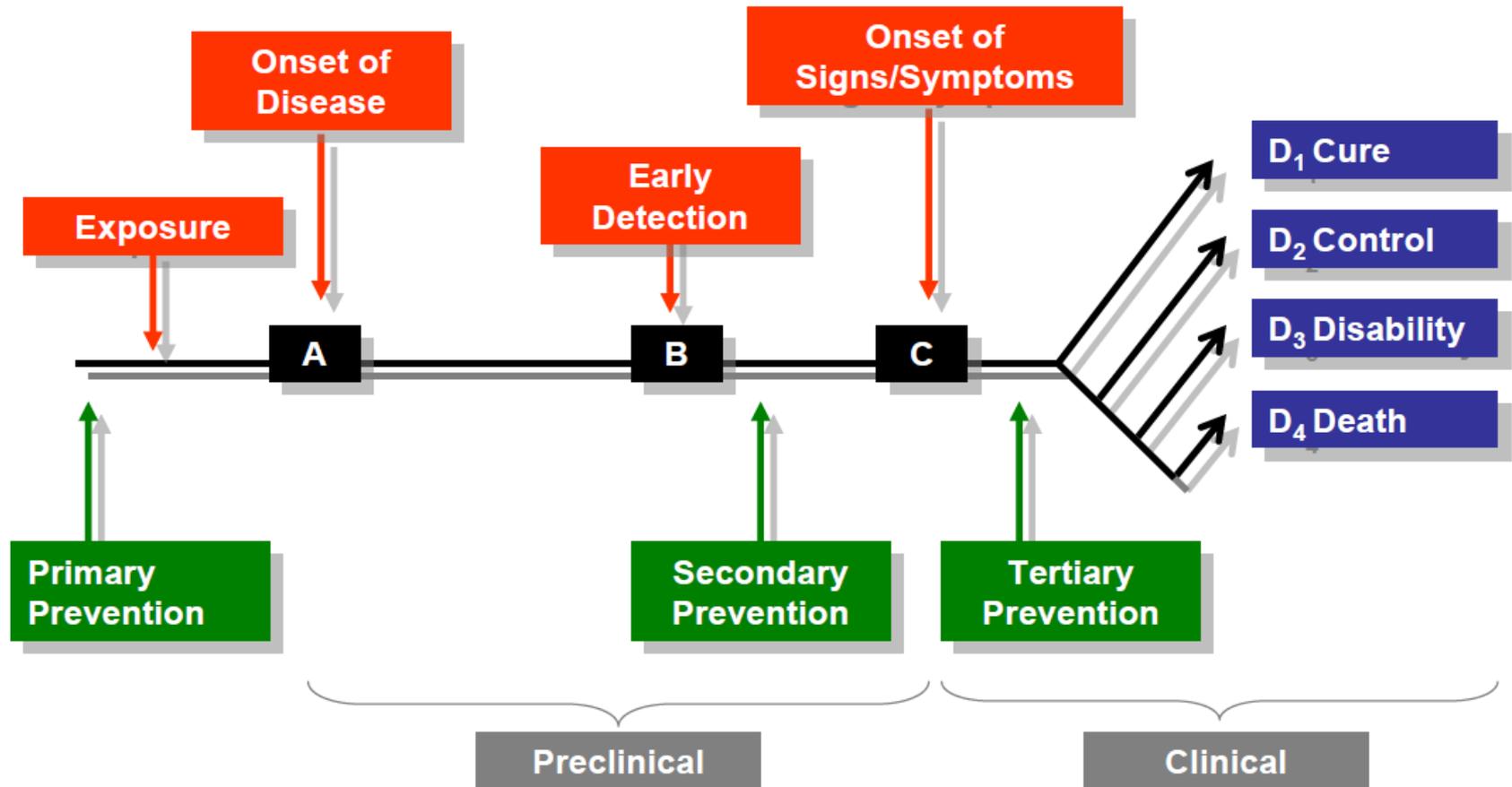


FIGURE 1—The health impact pyramid.



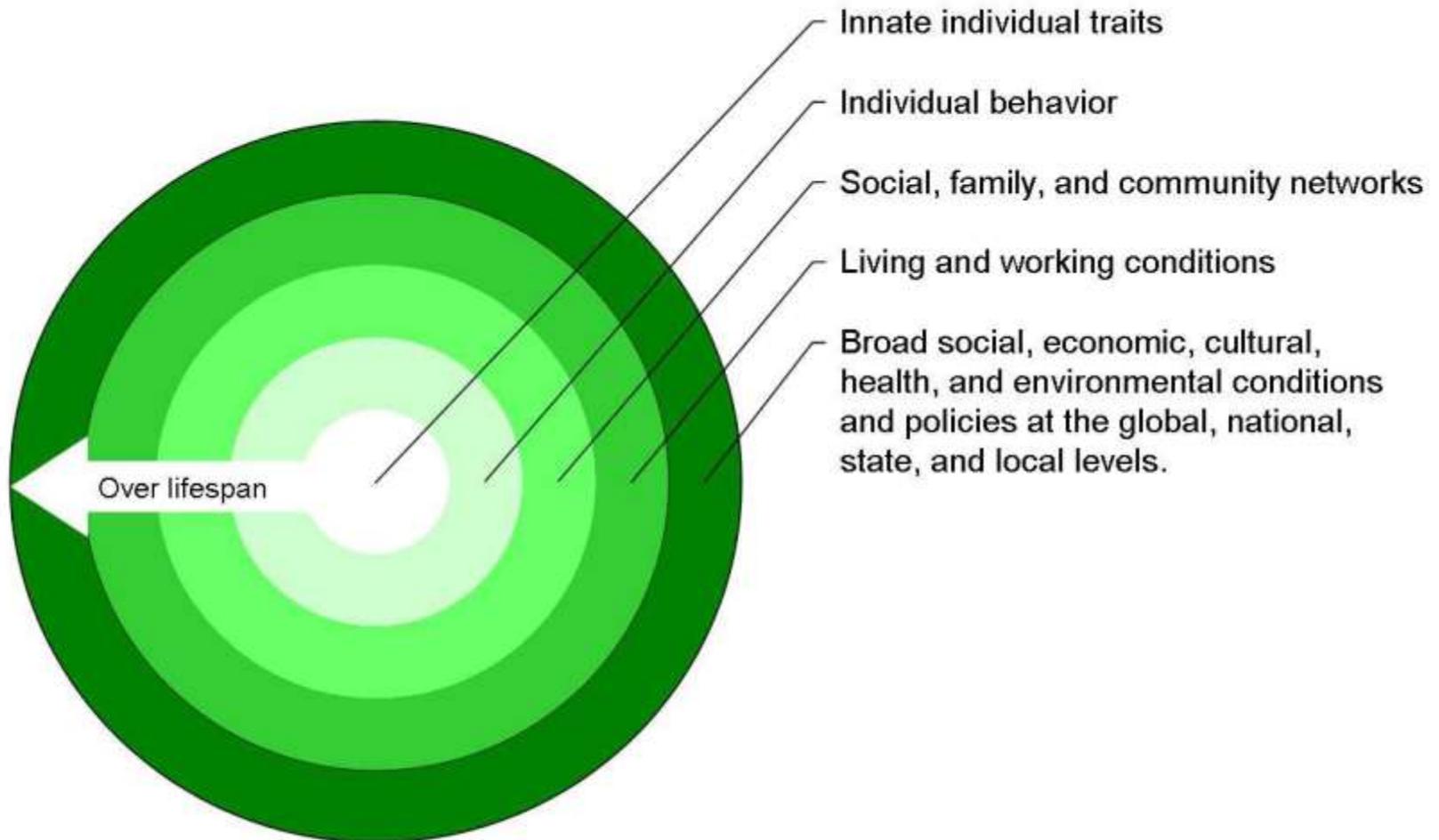
Source: Center for Disease Control Health Impact Pyramid, Dr. Thomas Frieden director of Centers for Disease Control

Natural History Of Cancer & Levels Of Prevention



Notes Available

Determinants of Population Health



Source: *John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: Public Health Practice 101*, Dr. Henry Taylor Adapted from Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

Public Health and Unnatural Causes

Public Health & Social Justice

- Access is more than an geographic issue
- Equity is different from equality
- Equity focuses on outcomes
- Equality addresses inputs (access)



Health Equity Quiz

- Please take 8 minutes to complete the Health Equity Quiz, we will return to the answers at the conclusion of the presentation.

In Sickness and In Wealth



Film Screening (45 min)

Discussion

Dr. David Williams says: “Stress helps motivate us. In our society today everybody experiences stress. The person who has no stress is a person who is dead.”

- Describe the body’s stress (fight or-flight) response.
- How is chronic stress different?
- How might chronic stress increase the risk of illness and disease?

Professor Leonard Syme defines control of destiny as the “ability to influence the events that impinge on your life.”

- Why is this ability an important factor for health?
- What stories from Corey Anderson’s life exemplify a high demand / low control job and stressful home situation?
- What stories from Jim Taylor’s life illustrate how wealth, power and status translate into better health?

Discussion

Dr. Adewale Troutman says that he promotes individual responsibility, but always within the context of social determinants.

- Why does he link the two?
- What is missing if we focus exclusively on individual responsibility?
- How does this affect possibilities for change?

Discussion

Some chronic stressors mentioned in the film are: being on guard all the time, having little control at work, living in an unsafe neighborhood, being uncertain about where food will come from, and worrying about one's children.

- What additional stressors can you think of?
- How does exposures to stressors—and resources available to manage them—vary with class position?
- Describe the societal forces that create and reinforce these stressors.
- What additional set of stressors might racism impose?

Discussion

Dr. Jack Shonkoff, when talking about early childhood, says, “The concept here is the pile-up of risk, the **cumulative burden of having things that are increasing your chances of having problems**, as opposed to the cumulative protection of having things in your life that increase the likelihood that you can have better outcomes.”

What are examples of the “pile up” of cumulative advantage—and disadvantage?

Discussion

**Sociologist David Williams say,
“Economic policy is health policy.”**

How has U.S. influenced health inequities and health outcomes?

What kinds of economic policies might reduce health inequities and improve the overall health of most Americans?

Activity and Dialogue (10 min)

Suggested Activity: Mapping Community Assets

This activity helps participants identify sources of stress and support in their lives and think about ways they might increase their level of power and control.

Resources		Stressors
	Food Access and Availability	
	Quality Education	
	Good Transportation/Planning	
	Affordable Housing	
	Good Jobs and Work Opportunities	
	Business Investment and Development	
	Income and Wealth	
	Social Supports	
	Public Safety	
	Green Spaces	
	Recreational Opportunities	

Health Equity Quiz Overview

- 1. E
- 2. B
- 3. D
- 4. E
- 5. C
- 6. E
- 7. D
- 8. E
- 9. E
- 10. E
- 11. C
- 12. D
- 13. A
- 14. C
- 15. A
- 16. A
- 17. B.
- 18. D
- 19. A
- 20. E
- 21. A
- 22. A