

## Raising the influence of Community Voices on Health Equity

### The Health Equity Exchange Experience



As presented by **Renata Schiavo, PhD, MA, CCL**, Founder and President,  
Board of Directors, Health Equity Initiative, at the:

- 2012 SUMMIT ON THE SCIENCE TO ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES, National Institute of Health and CDC
- 2016 Health Equity Initiative Summit
- 2017 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting

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### As presented at...

- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), NIH, **2012 SUMMIT ON THE SCIENCE TO ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES**, Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, National Harbor, Maryland December 17, 2012 (poster presentation)
- **Health Equity Initiative 2016 Partnership Summit**, CAI Meeting and Event Center, New York, NY, February 26, 2016 (poster presentation)
- **American Public Health Association (APHA) 2017 Annual Meeting**, Georgia, World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA, November 6, 2017 (roundtable presentation)

- \* Presenting author/Project Director

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**What is Health Equity?  
One definition...**

Providing every person with the same opportunity to stay healthy and/or effectively cope with disease and crisis -- regardless of socio-economic conditions, race, gender, age, social status, environment, and/or other socially determined factors.

Schiavo, R. (2011-2013), Health Equity Initiative



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## Health Equity Goes Beyond Healthcare



- Social determinants of health include:
  - Socioeconomics
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Power levels
  - Access to: services, transportations, housing, etc.
  - Culture
  - Health literacy
  - Social support
  - Many other socially determined factors
- **Priorities and progress indicators should be community-specific!**



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## + Why Health Equity Matters



- Basic human right
- Key determinant of economic and social development
- Is influenced by and influences individual (e.g. stages in one's life) and social transitions (e.g. demographic, economic changes)

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- We may know it matters **BUT**:
  - Still, new and complex concept for most people
  - Only 59% of 3,159 US adults participating in recent survey are aware of health disparities
  - Only a modest 4.5% awareness gain in last decade
- Interplay of different factors – including and beyond healthcare – add to complexity; need for community-specific solutions

Sources: Benz, Espinosa, Welsh and Fontes, 2011

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## + *Health Equity Exchange* Uses an Integrated Multimedia Communication Approach



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## + *What is Health Equity Exchange?*

### **HEi** Health Equity Initiative

- A program of Health Equity Initiative (2011-2013)
- A space where people throughout the US can speak specifically to two main issues:
  - What health equity means to them, their families, peers and community
  - Top priorities to advance health equity

### Specific Objectives

- Help raise influence of community voices on health equity
- Raise awareness, engage different segments of society and communities via social media, event and community outreach on health equity issues
- Provide proof-of concept on the many faces/aspects of health equity
- Inform future programs/ policies

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Health Equity Exchange



The Health Equity Exchange is a space to voice comments, ideas, and questions related to health equity.

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Dreaming about health equity is not enough to improve the quality of life of underserved and minority populations. Your contribution can touch the health and lives of communities both in the US and globally by supporting our efforts to develop a systematic approach to addressing health equity!

Thank you!

Click here to make a contribution.



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We Need A Social Movement for Health Equity!  
Here Are 5 Easy Ways You Can Help in 2012!

Posted by admin on January 6, 2012 · 2 Comments

Read about our inaugural 2012 post and call to action! Happy 2012 from all us at HEI...and get involved!




Category: Health Equity Exchange · Tags:

What are the top 3 priorities?

Posted by admin on September 12, 2011 · 22 Comments

What are the top 3 priorities that need to be addressed to make progress towards health equity in your community?




Category: Health Equity Exchange · Tags:

What does health equity mean to you?

Posted by admin on September 12, 2011 · 30 Comments

Join the discussion and let us know what health equity means to you.




Category: Health Equity Exchange · Tags:

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rramesh says:

November 14, 2011 at 7:50 pm



I am one of the nearly 1.5 million Indian-born people who currently live in the United States – currently the fourth largest immigrant population after the Mexican, Filipino, and Chinese foreign-born. Though many are fairly proficient in English, cultural differences, as with many other groups, have a part to play in our health related experiences. As an example, many Asian Indians (especially older patients) prefer their doctors to make health-related decisions on their behalf, as opposed to a more participatory style of decision making where the doctor presents them with options to be discussed. They often consider doctors to be authority figures and are more accustomed to answering questions than asking them. Asian Indian patients may thus be more inclined to play a passive role and may hesitate to express their concerns. Asian Indians also often find the US healthcare system difficult to navigate.

Such factors and variations in social customs and culture can affect diagnosis, treatment, and ultimately health outcomes. My understanding is that any such barrier that prevents a person from effectively utilizing the health services available to him, and reaching the best level of health that is possible, could be construed as an issue of health equity.

Training clinicians to be culturally competent can help bridge the gap. In this example, doctors can invite patients to be more forthcoming about their anxieties. However, it might be equally essential to educate the patient to ensure that no important information is unintentionally withheld, justified fears are left unexpressed, or life-saving options are left unutilized.

Source: Health Equity Exchange

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jpl84 says:

April 6, 2012 at 11:53 pm




HEILIU  
JOELLE

Health equity means having the best and equal access to healthcare regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender and ethnicity

Log in to Reply

Liz says:

April 10, 2012 at 7:34 pm



To me health equity is an ideal that seems so out of reach. In my neighborhood in the Bronx, inequities cut across all arenas; healthcare, education, housing, nutrition... the list goes on. Sadly, these all contribute to poor health outcomes for residents. Health equity for us will mean equality in access to quality healthcare services, housing and education without regard to background.

Personally, I think the three priorities in the area are access to quality primary care, fresh fruits and vegetables and quality and affordable housing. The path to health equity is definitely a long and tedious one.

Log in to Reply

Source: Health Equity Exchange

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### More on “Health Equity” In Participants’ Own Words...

“To be honest, I have no idea what health equity is, so to my knowledge it means nothing to me.”

*Exchange participant from New York, NY*

“I actually never heard the term “health equity” before. If I had to think of what it means, I’m guessing it means making sure everyone has an equal chance at being healthy.”

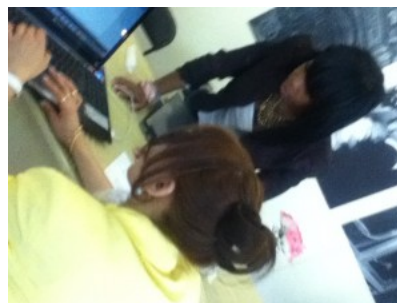
*Exchange Participant from Newark, NJ*

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Health Equity Exchange  
Campus Toolkit

*Health Equity Exchange is an online forum facilitated by Health Equity Initiative to involve U.S. communities, and the organizations that work with them, in discussing ways to improve health equity.*

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## Discussion/Key Facts

- 95+ unique and insightful perspectives/opinions that may not be available otherwise
- Participants provided multiple definitions of health equity
- Health Equity defined as associated to 5 broad categories:
  - Improvements in the living and working environments and socio-economic opportunities
  - Access to resources and information to lead healthy lifestyle
  - Cultural competency and health workforce development
  - Access to a regular source of care
  - Access to equal, affordable healthcare



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## Discussion/Key Facts

- Some still don't know what health equity is
- Key priorities to achieve health equity differ among participants
  - Differences across communities/geographical locations



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## Summary

- Health Equity Exchange, a program of Health Equity Initiative, designed to:
  - Help raise the influence of community voices on health equity
  - Engage different segments of society/communities across the U.S. to define health equity in their own words and to get involved
  - Provide proof-of concept on the many faces/definitions of health equity and the need for community-specific interventions
  - Inform future programs and policies
- Program implements a participatory, integrated, and multimedia approach to health communication programming for behavioral and social change\*

\*Sources: Schiavo, 2011 and 2013;

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## Summary

- Many different topics highlighted by participants within the 5 broad categories to which they associate “health equity” and key priorities to be addressed in their communities
- Proof of concept on importance of community-specific definitions of health equity and related interventions
  - Relevance for WHO does WHAT by WHEN by HOW MUCH\*
  - Variety of topics/issues to be addressed
  - Need for broader engagement across different communities, disciplines, and sectors

\* Schiavo, 2007 and 2014

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## Future Directions/Implications

- Integrated/multimedia programs as the *Exchange* can be used to raise the influence of community voices on health equity, and to document perspectives
- Actively engage different communities to define own road map to/definition of health equity
  - Provide opportunities to influence policy and practice
- Design health information to be easy-to-understand and relevant to vulnerable groups (e.g., low health literacy populations; those experiencing language barriers)



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## Future Directions/Implications

- As urban planning decisions have significant impact on health equity, partnerships are needed among urban designers, community leaders and professionals across sectors to design culturally sensitive and functional built environments
- Increase workforce diversity, to improve cultural humility in healthcare and clinical settings
  - Reform recruiting practices of healthcare organizations



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## Future Directions/Implications

- Improve access to affordable and quality health care
  - Define fair measures and standards
  - Ensure equitable distribution of primary care and preventive services
  - Develop strategies to address workforce shortages
  - Focus on underserved neighborhoods/marginalized communities

**Increased investment in community-centered programs is needed across sectors and disciplines**



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