HSC4211 Health, Behavior and Society

Racism, Structural Factors and Health Inequities: Part 1
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Session Objectives
- Present definitions of racism
- Discuss the relationships between racism and inequitable health status and outcomes for communities of color
- To discuss Segregation as a cofactor of poor health
- To examine structural determinants of health such as systems of education, housing, SES and place

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Structural
- 1. Something made up of a number of parts that are held or put together in a particular way: hierarchical social structure.
- 2. The way in which parts are arranged or put together to form a whole; makeup: triangular in structure.
- 3. The interrelation or arrangement of parts in a complex entity: political structure; plot structure.

The Elephant in the Room: Racism

Race and Racism
- Health and the health care industry suffer the same history as other sectors of American society (slave experimentation, forced sterilization, medical pseudoscience to justify Jim Crow)
- Examples of access limitation secondary to race
  - CABG, Angioplasty
  - AIDS medications
  - NEJM study on chest pain
The Illusion of Race

Race
- Non existence of a “pure race”
- Lack of a clear and consistent definition of race
- The social genesis and function of racial classification
- The role of racism in society
- Methodological problems associated with varied meanings of Race
- Different concepts of race

Race (Cont)
- Social race vs Biological race
- Differences often expressed for the sake of maintaining a superior economic and social position
- Current racial and ethnic designations have little to do with science
  - pragmatic
  - political expediency

Human Genome Project

Race (Cont)
- Race refers to Biological homogeneity
- Ethnic refers to Cultural homogeneity
- Pure races never existed
  - Intermixing
  - Extensive genetic variation
- “There is greater genetic variation within racial groups than between them”

Racism
- History and contemporary manifestation of structural inequality and discrimination and or ideology based on color supremacy
- Must be included as variables in public health and research
- Individual and societal viewpoint
- Manifestations in health and medicine
There is increasing recognition of the importance of social and structural determinants in community and individual health. Among them are race, racism and socioeconomic status.

“The Enslaved Health Deficit”; Pseudoscience and Racism in Medicine

Pseudoscience of Racism

The Round Up Period

The Slave Ship
Living Africans Thrown Overboard The Slave Ship Zong in 1781

The history of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow has created the framework for people of color to suffer health status inequities based on the history of institutionalized racism.

Joy – a feeling
That can last a moment
Even a day or a week

Hurt – also a feeling that
Can last generations…

Click HERE to listen to ‘Strange Fruit’
Vital Statistics

What If We Had Eliminated Disparities in the Last Century?

Fewer Black Deaths...
In 2000
- 85,000 overall
- 24,000 from heart disease
- 7,000 from HIV / AIDS
- 4,700 infant deaths
- 22,000 from diabetes
- 2000 fewer Black women from breast cancer

More Health Insurance Coverage...
- 2.5 million Blacks, including 620,000 children

What If We Were Equal
- Progress in closing the gap in Civil Rights, housing and education
- Health inequities continue to exist
- Overall widening of mortality gap
- Some improvement in African American women but trending up again
- Infants and African American men in particular account for majority
- 83,570/year x 40 years =3.3 million lives lost

Other Structural Contributions to Health Inequities in Communities of Color
Downstream vs. Upstream
- 245,000-low education
- 175,000-racial segregation
- 162,000-low societal support
- 133,000-individual level poverty
- 119,000-income inequality
- 39,000-area level poverty

“Societal”Causes of Death 2000
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- 175,000-racial segregation
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Looking upstream, finding the causes of the causes.
Social Determinants

- Socioeconomic Status
  - Occupation
  - Education
  - Income
    - Income gaps
  - Racism & discrimination
  - Housing
  - Political power

- WHO
- Early Life
- Social Exclusion
- Work
- Unemployment
- Social Support
- Addiction
- Food
- Transport
- The Social Gradient
- Stress

The web of causation; Has anyone seen the spider? What are the structural determinants of health?

The Spiders Revealed

- Institutional racism
- Gender discrimination and exploitation
- Socio-economic status and class exploitation