

Veterans Health Administration

Office of Health Equity

What is it all about?

November 4, 2013

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<http://vaww.pdush.med.va.gov/programs/ohe/oheDefault.aspx>



Office of Health Equity -VHA 10A6
Washington DC

VHA Office of Health Equity- *What is it all about?*

- ❑ How is VHA joining the dialogue on health disparities in vulnerable populations?
- ❑ What actions can each of us take in our areas of influence to move towards attainment of the highest level of health for all?

Poll Question #1

- What is your primary role in VA?
 - student, trainee, or fellow
 - clinician
 - researcher
 - manager or policy-maker
 - Other

Global Perspective – making a case for health equity

❖ Benefits of reducing health inequalities

❑ The benefits of reducing health inequalities are economic as well as social.

❑ The cost of health inequalities can be measured in

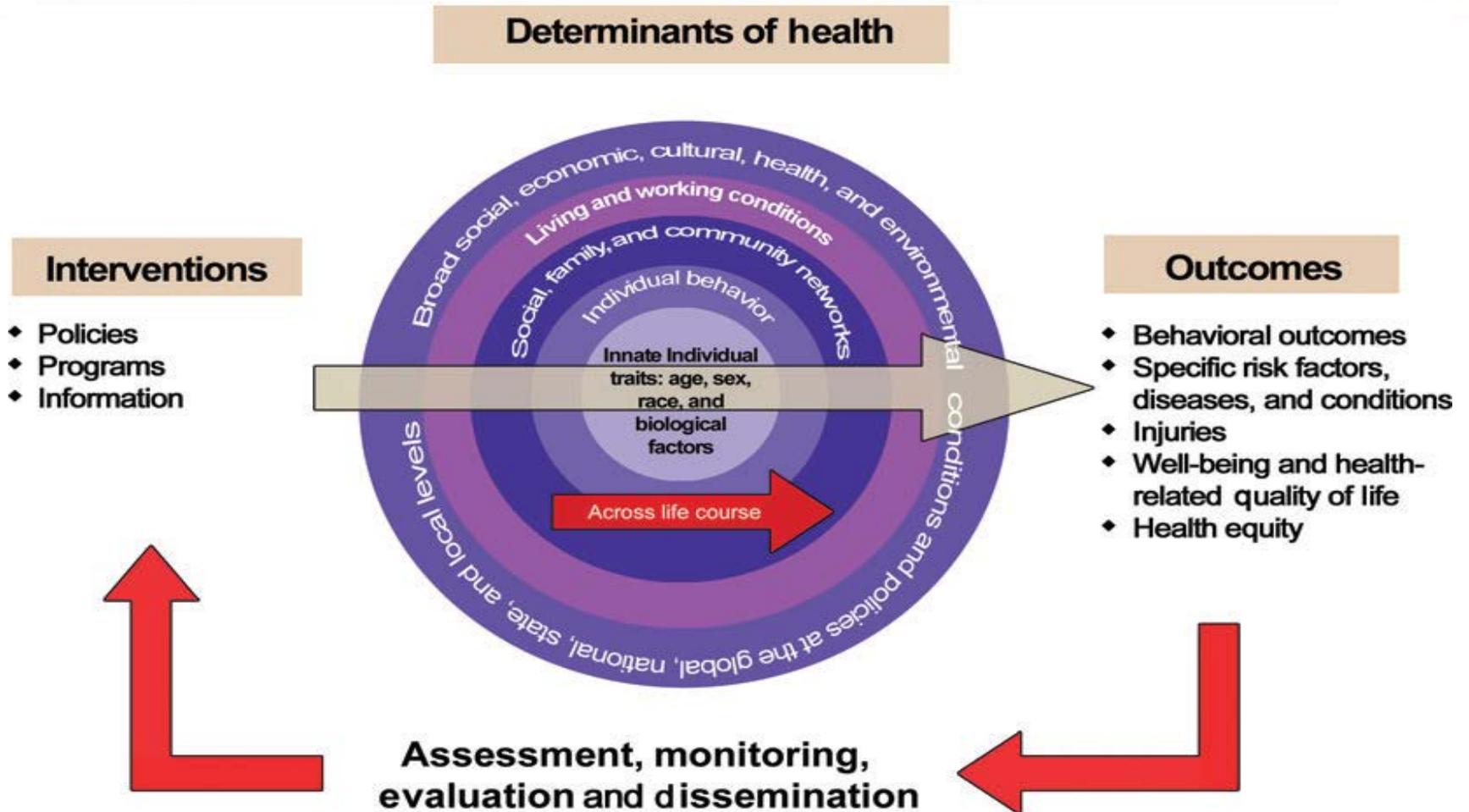
➤ human terms - lost years of life and active life

➤ Economic terms - the cost to the economy of additional illness

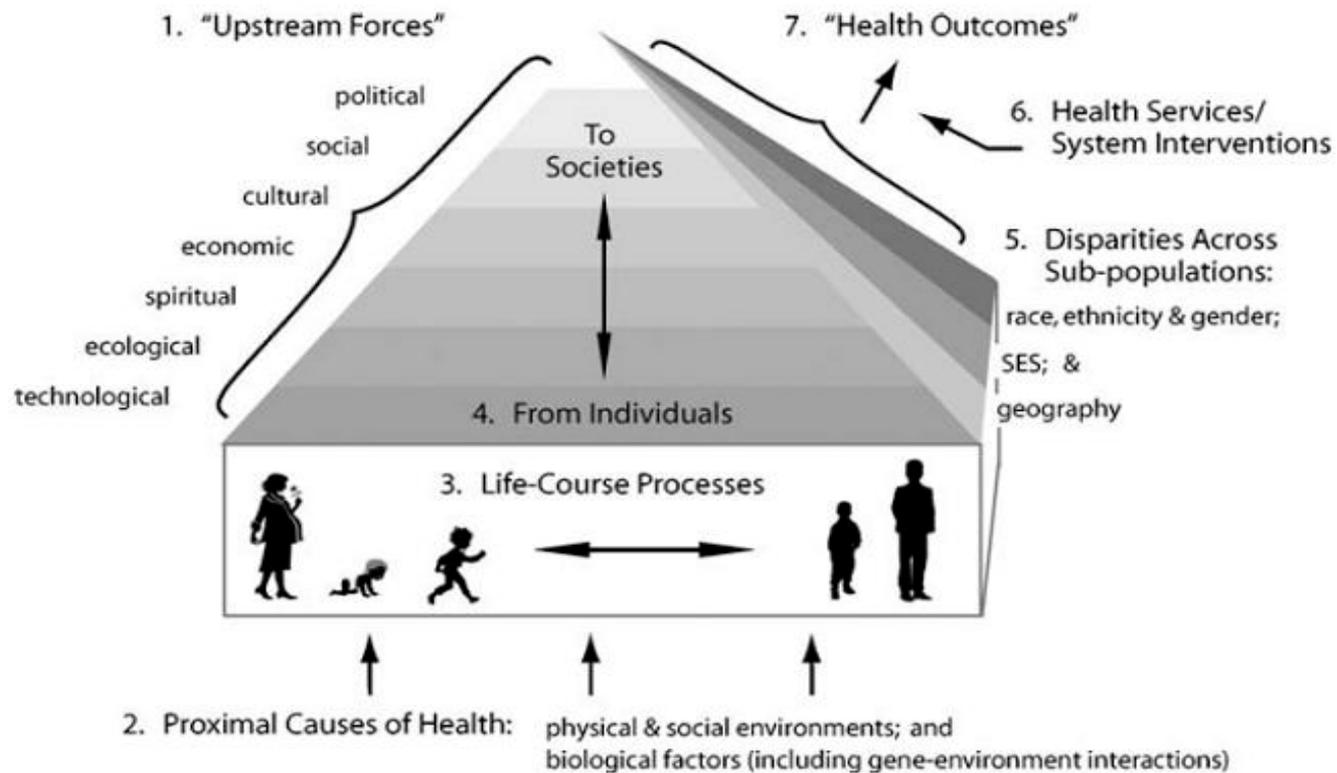
❖ What is the global burden of disease?

❖ What is the Veteran burden of disease?

Action model to achieve Healthy People 2020 overarching goals



Indicators of Population Health



V. Etches, J. Frank, E. DiRuggerio, and D. Manuel. (2006). Measuring population health: a review of indicators. *Annual Review of Public Health*, Volume 27, pp. 29-55.

ACA and Health Equity



Global Perspective – making a case for health equity

- ❑ **The National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities (NPA)** was established by HHS OMH to mobilize a nationwide, comprehensive, community-driven, and sustained approach to combating health disparities and to move the nation toward achieving health equity – 2000 Partners
- ❑ **The mission of the NPA** is to increase the effectiveness of programs that target the elimination of health disparities through the coordination of partners, leaders, and stakeholders committed to action
- ❖ VA made commitment as one of the federal partners in NPA

VHA Office of Health Equity - Vision

- **The Veterans Health Administration** provides appropriate individualized health care to each Veteran in a way that eliminates disparate health outcomes and assures health equity.
 - **Office of Health Equity** champions the advancement of health equity and reduction of health disparities

VHA Office of Health Equity –VHA Strategic Plan

❖ VHA Strategic Plan Goal 1 of 3:

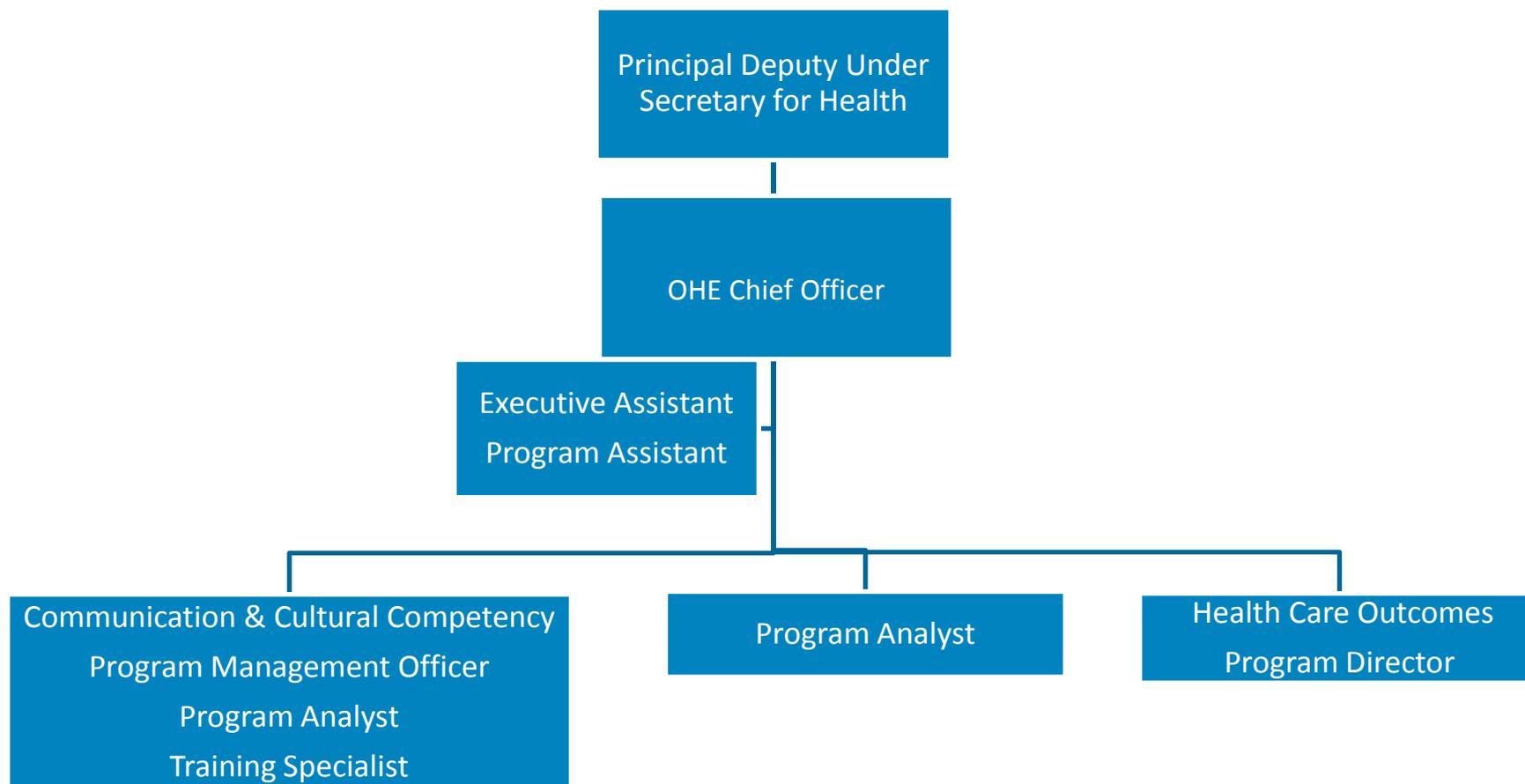
VHA GOAL (1): PROVIDE VETERANS PERSONALIZED, PROACTIVE, PATIENT-DRIVEN HEALTH CARE

❑ Objective: (*NLC Committee -HDC, HQVC*)

1e. Quality & Equity – Veterans will receive timely, high quality, personalized, safe effective and equitable health care, irrespective of *geography, gender, race, age, culture or sexual orientation*

➤ A section on the VHA strategic plan means weaving it into discussions *at all levels of policy, decision making, resource allocation, practice , performance plans etc.*

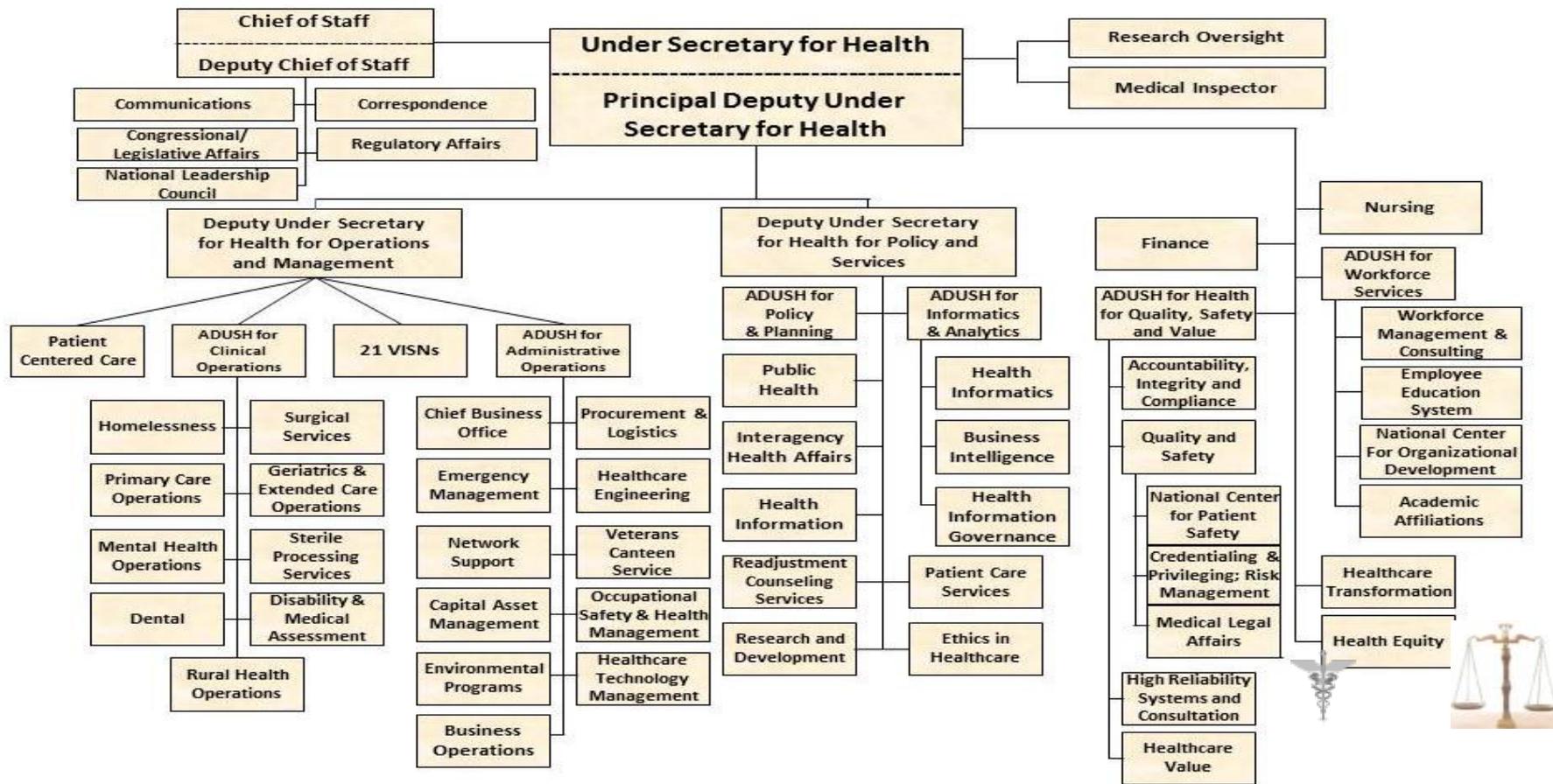
VHA Office of Health Equity -Organizational Structure



VHA Office of Health Equity- With USH



VHA - Organizational Structure : OHE=10A6



VHA Office of Health Equity - Definitions

- ❑ **Health equity** is attainment of the highest level of health for all people.
- Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the ***elimination of health and healthcare disparities.***



VHA Office of Health Equity - Definitions

❑ **A health disparity** is a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage.

➤ Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social and/or economic obstacles to health and/or a clean environment based on these:

- Racial or ethnic group
- Gender
- Age
- Geographic location
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Mental health
- Disability
 - ✓ cognitive /sensory / physical
- other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion

VHA Office of Health Equity - Definitions

- ❖ **Not all health differences amount to a health disparity**
- ❑ **A subset of differences linked with social disadvantage**
- ❑ **Adverse health in a socially disadvantaged / vulnerable group**

Question for Participants

❖ Which of the following Veterans is likely to have a health disparity?

✓ Select all that apply

- A. An African American male who served in Vietnam and lives in Hope, Arkansas
- B. A Transgender white Veteran with PTSD who lives in Iowa City, Iowa
- C. A Hispanic female Veteran with HIV who lives in Houston, Texas
- D. 60 year old unemployed Veteran who sleeps on the steps of the Capitol in DC
- E. A Native American Veteran who lives in Winnemucca, Nevada

The issue with Averages...

- ***“The poor are getting poorer, but with the rich getting richer it all averages out in the long run.”***



“The poor are getting poorer, but with the rich getting richer it all averages out in the long run.”

Quotes on Health Disparity and/or Health inequity

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." -- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Excerpt from comments made in a Civil Rights protest against racially discriminatory practices of Chicago hospitals.
March 1966, Chicago

- **"It is time to refocus, reinforce, and repeat the message that health disparities exist and that health and equity benefits everyone"** – Kathleen G. Sebelius, Secretary, Health & Human Services (HHS disparities Action Plan)



Raising the bar by elevating the disadvantaged outliers

- Performance Measures track percentage on target for particular measure
- What if we tracked the same measure(s) with an equity lens?**
- What if the percent on target is broken down by age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, mental , medical and physical disabilities?
- Would your facility still meet the measure for all populations?
- If the answer is no, THIS IS your call to action!

VHA Office of Health Equity - Mission

□ OHE Mission

- Champion efforts to address health disparities through education, training, communications and information
- Coordinate programs, projects and initiatives that address health disparities and equality, in order to bring *synergy* and *break down silos* within the organization
- Represent VHA and serve as *liaison to other governmental and non-governmental organizations* working to achieve health equity
- Position VHA as a national *leader* in achieving equitable health care and outcomes
- capitalize on the existing network of minority *advocates*to coordinate and harness efforts to advance health equity by achieving equitable health care and outcomes

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

❑ Leadership

❑ Awareness

❑ Health Outcomes

❑ Diversity and Cultural Competency of the Workforce

❑ Data, Research and Evaluation

- *Five-goal framework of the NPA National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity*
- *The Affordable Care Act under Title IV. "Prevention of Chronic Disease and Improving public Health"; Section 4302 – "Understanding health disparities: data collection and analysis"*

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

❖ Leadership

- ❑ **Leadership** -Strengthen and broaden the ability of VA leadership to address health inequalities and reduce health disparities through operations, policy, oversight and research.

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

❖ Awareness

- ❑ **Awareness** -Increase awareness of the significance of health inequalities and disparities, their impact on the nation, and the actions necessary within VHA to improve health care and health outcomes for disadvantaged populations

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

❖ Health Outcomes

□ **Health Outcomes** -Improve health and health care outcomes for Veteran sub-populations experiencing health disparities

- *The Affordable Care Act under Title IV. “Prevention of Chronic Disease and Improving public Health”;*
Section 4302 – “Understanding health disparities: data collection and analysis”
- *Also linked to the Community Health Needs Assessment Provision of ACA*

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

❖ Diversity and Cultural Competency of the Workforce

□ Diversity and Cultural Competency of the Workforce

Improve cultural and linguistic competency and the diversity of the VA workforce involved in advancing the health and well-being of Veterans

- *Also linked to the Workforce Diversity section in ACA*

VHA Office of Health Equity - Goals and Functions

□ Data, Research and Evaluation

□ **Data, Research and Evaluation** -Improve the availability, coordination, and utilization of data and diffusion of research and evaluation outcomes in order to track progress towards the achievement of health equity

- *The Affordable Care Act under Title IV. “Prevention of Chronic Disease and Improving public Health”;*
Section 4302 – “Understanding health disparities: data collection and analysis”

VHA Office of Health Equity - Expected Deliverables

- Integrative VHA Health Equity Action Plan *
- Comprehensive Health Equity Communication Plan
- Analyses using process, outcomes, and satisfaction metrics that enhance understanding and track progress towards achieving health equity
- Multifaceted Cultural Competency Training Program

Audience question

- **Five-goal framework of the NPA National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity includes all the following except:**
 - A. Affordable Care Act**
 - B. Awareness**
 - C . Health Outcomes**
 - D. Diversity and Cultural Competency of the Workforce**
 - Data, Research and Evaluation**

VHA Office of Health Equity -Health Equity Coalition - PDUSH

- Established by the VHA PDUSH
- Memo signed March 21, 2013 tasked to Program offices
- Chief Officer, Office of Health Equity = Chair of the Coalition
- Coalition responsible for:
 - ✓ Assuring that there is a comprehensive and aligned approach across VHA
 - ✓ Ensuring the availability of necessary resources, and
 - ✓ Ongoing assessment of impact on improvements

VHA Office of Health Equity -Health Equity Coalition > Charge

- ❑ Maintain a professional connection to the mission and leadership of OHE
- ❑ Advise & assist OHE in the development of the Health Equity Action Plan
- ❑ Commit appropriate organizational resources to
 - Implement the initiatives, programs and strategies in the Health Equity Action Plan
 - Set milestones and review progress to ensure timely completion of initiatives
- ❑ Provide the necessary support to ensure that VHA emerges as a national leader in coordinated, system-wide efforts to achieve health care equity
- ❑ Encouraged to engage as appropriate with external organizations that have expertise in health equity

VHA Office of Health Equity -Health Equity Coalition

> Membership

- Center for Minority Veterans
- Office of Communications
- Office of ADUSH for Clinical Operations
- Network Director – identified by 10N
- Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation
- Office of the ADUSH for Informatics and Analytics
- Office of ADUSH for Policy and Planning
- Office of Nursing*
- Office of Public Health
- Office of ADUSH for Patient Care Services
- Office of Women’s Health
- Office of Research and Development
- Director Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion
- National Center for Ethics in Health Care
- Office of the ADUSH for Workforce Services
- Office of ADUSH for Quality, Safety & Value
- VISN Chief Medical Officer*

VHA Office of Health Equity -Health Equity Coalition

> Kick off

- ❑ Maiden meeting - Thursday, May 30 , 2013
- ❑ The expanse of coverage for vulnerable Veteran populations noted
 - Agreed to prioritize over time
 - Take stock of “*what we know*” and include other stakeholders
- ❑ Presentations: Health Equity + Policy and Planning +Informatics and Analytics+ Public Health +ESP
- ❑ Meetings – May 30, June 25, July 24, 2013
- ❑ 1.5 day Face to Face meeting September 2013 – >>>>>>>>

❖ **Draft of the First VHA Health Equity Action Plan**

- A guide and in flux as we chart new territories in VHA Health Equity.

VHA Office of Health Equity - Current Projects

Health Equity Coalition*

☐ VHA Strategic Plan goal 1 Objective e- Quality and Equity

Goal 1e- in progress with OP&P, OSI – complete. NLC next , then implementation

☐ Clinical Look at Unconscious Bias – CLUB In response to ACMV 2012

OHE in collaboration with CHERP –Houston, Martinsburg and Pittsburgh -Conclusion anticipated in Q2 of FY14

☐ **Healthcare Equality Index – HEI 2013 Complete!** LGBT Workgroup task to OHE

92 VAMCs made Leader status - 121 participated

☐ **Creating awareness of OHE mission and building critical partnerships**

Presentations/dialogue within and outside of VHA including ALL OF YOU On this cyber seminar!

☐ **Active involvement on the Federal Interagency Health Equity Team –FIHET**

OHE active on the workgroups including one exploring a federal disparity/health equity related data repository

Exploring Community Health Workers

Audience Poll by Molly

- *Have you seen the OHE Call For Papers for VA Health Equity American Journal of Public Health Supplement?*
- Yes
- No
- May be
- Do not know
- What is that?

121 VAMCs participated, 92 made Leader status!

HEI Press Conference July 2013 @ VACO



VHA Office of Health Equity - Current Projects 2

Military Cultural Awareness Workgroup*-Complete

Chaired by OHE Lisa Red- Recommendations in review and discussion for next steps

Did you know there was a TMS training for Military Cultural Awareness?

Exploratory work & education on health outcomes & issues on LGBT Veterans

In progress by OHE Dr. George Brown and Dr. Kenneth Jones with IRB via Mountain Home TN VAMC

Collaboration with the Patient Care Services LGBT coordinators

LGBT coordinators aligned under Patient Care Services – Dr. Michael Kauth and Dr. Jillian Shipherd

Collaboration with Researchers and Data Analysts-> *Think Tank July 2013

Input and project ideas + collaboration opportunities

Evidence Synthesis Program topic nomination

OHE topic nomination for HSR&D ESP on PC Access for Mentally Ill Veterans – > Durham ESP Center

American Journal of Public Health Supplement on VA Health Equity

Have you seen the OHE- AJPB Call For Papers? Deadline Jan 10, 2014!

VA Health Equity AJPH Supplement

CFP_VA Health Equity_2013.pdf - Adobe Reader

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Sign Comment

American Journal of
PUBLIC HEALTH Call for Papers
VA Health Equity

The American Journal of Public Health (AJPH), in collaboration with the VHA Office of Health Equity, intends to publish an **open access, online-only supplemental issue on VA Health Equity**. Original papers are invited that focus on improving the understanding of the root causes of health and health care disparities or on reducing or eliminating such disparities among vulnerable Veteran populations and patients treated within the VA Healthcare System. Vulnerable populations are groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social and/or economic obstacles to health and/or a clean environment based on their race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location of residence, medical or psychiatric illness, or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

Potential authors should visit the *AJPH* website (<http://www.ajph.org>) to review the *Instructions for Authors* and specific guidelines for the various types of manuscripts. Research papers (3,500 words) and Briefs (800 words) are encouraged. All manuscripts will undergo standard peer review by the *AJPH* editors and peer referees as defined by the *AJPH* policy. To be considered for inclusion in this supplement, papers must be submitted by **January 10, 2014**, using the online submission system at <http://www.editorialmanager.com/ajph>. For additional information about this supplement, please contact the co-guest editors at Eunice.Andrews2@va.gov.

Guest Editors: **Said A. Ibrahim, MD, MPH**, UPENN School of Medicine, Co-Director, VA CHERP; **Michael J. Fine, MD, MSc**, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Director, VA CHERP; **Leonard Egede, MD, MSc**, Medical University of South Carolina, Director, VA HEROIC; and **Uche S. Uchendu, MD**, Chief Officer, VHA Office of Health Equity, VA Central Office, Washington, DC.

11:16 PM 10/28/2013

VHA Office of Health Equity – Project CLUB “Pilot”

❖ Clinical Look at Unconscious Bias – CLUB

➤ OHE In partnership with CHERP

- ❑ The pilot intended for PACTs – MD, RN, LPN, SW, Pharm-D, MSA & Dieticians
- ❑ Interactive cultural competency training program for PACTs that addresses unconscious bias
- ❑ Assess feasibility and acceptability of the program by implementing it in a small sample of PACTs
- ❑ Collect preliminary data to assess the impact of the program on select patient and provider outcomes

VHA Office of Health Equity- *What is it all about?*

- ❑ How is VHA joining the dialogue on health disparities in vulnerable populations?
- ❑ What actions can each of us take in our areas of influence to move towards attainment of the highest level of health for all?

What can you do?

❖ VHA Strategic Plan Goal 1 Objective e

❖ Quality and Equity

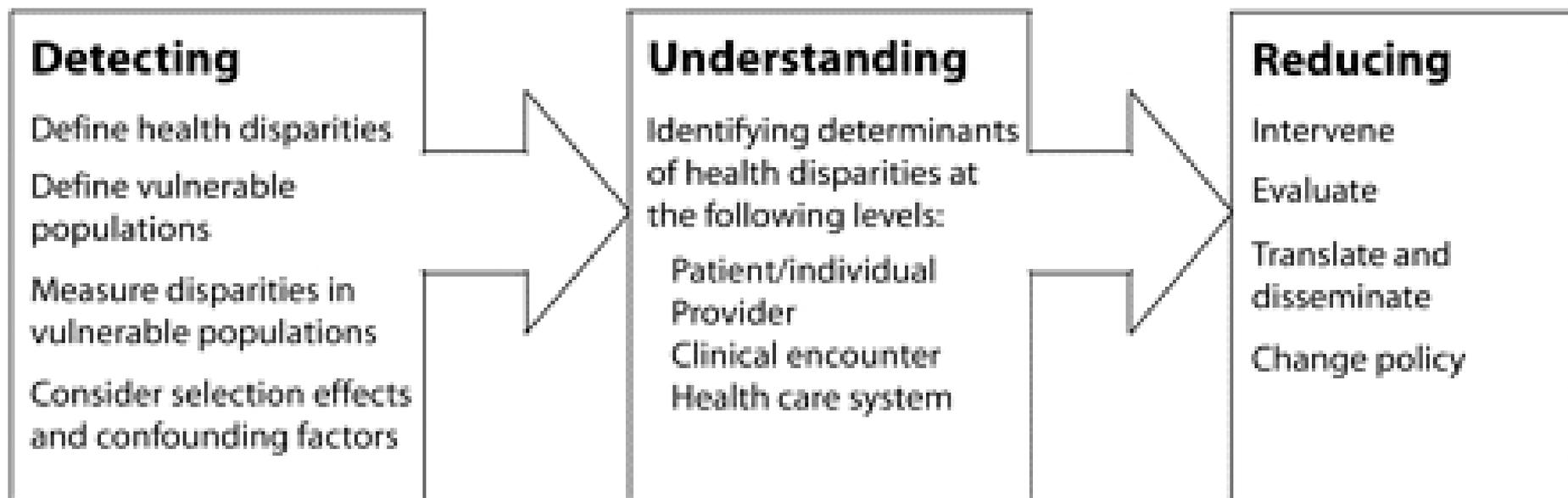
❑ **1.e.1. (Strategy): VHA will develop an understanding of where health and health care inequities exist and identify factors that contribute to inequity in Veteran populations, and intervene to eliminate inequities.**

❑ **Performance Plan:**

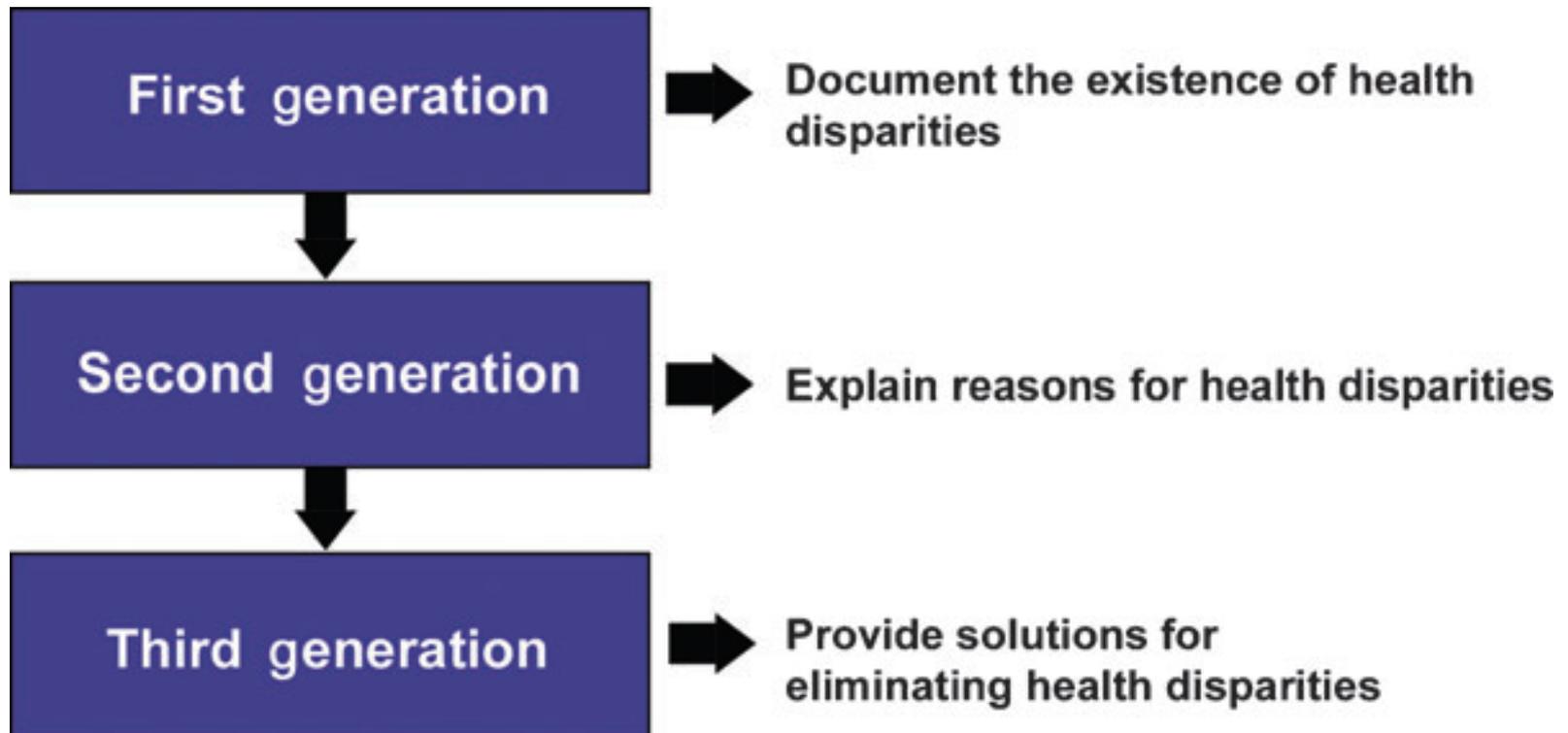
➤ Demonstrates understanding of where health and health care inequity exists and addresses disparities.

What can you do? A conceptual framework

- Kilbourne A, Switzer G, Hyman K, Crowley-Matoka M, Fine M. 2006. Advancing health disparities research within the health care system: a conceptual framework. *Am. J. Public Health* 96:2113–21



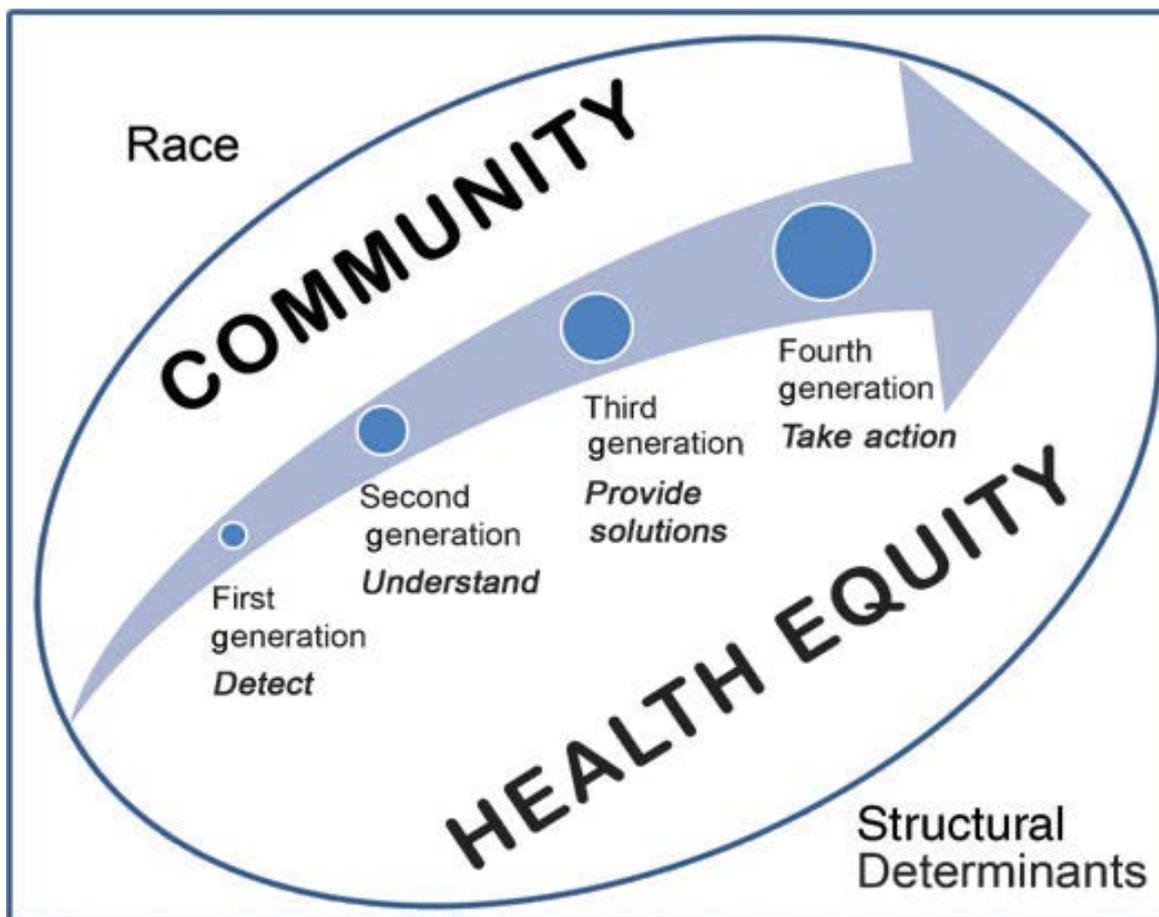
What can you do?



Health Disparities Research

- ❑ **Health disparities research**= a broad multi-faceted field that includes basic, applied, clinical, social and behavioral research that relates to significant disparities in the overall rate of disease incidence, prevalence, morbidity or survival rates in a population, including individuals and members of such populations
- ❑ Includes the causes of such disparities and methods to identify, prevent, diagnose and treat such disparities, with the eventual goal to addressing causes and implementing solutions

Health equity action research trajectory



Population Health Research

- Population health research examines the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group
- Research approaches include metrics of health outcomes, patterns of health determinants and policies and programs that link these two

What can you do?

- Cast an *equity lens* on all decisions and actions
- Become aware of your unconscious bias
- Get culturally competent
- Target *vulnerable Veteran* populations for Quality Improvement and Research Projects
- Recall performance measure questions earlier...

Raising the bar by elevating the disadvantaged outliers

- Performance Measures track percentage on target for particular measure
- What if we tracked the same measure(s) with an equity lens?**
- What if the percent on target is broken down by age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, mental , medical and physical disabilities?
- Would your facility still meet the measure for all populations?
- If the answer is no, THIS IS your call to action!
- ❖ Repeat exercise for several other scenarios relevant to your work and area of influence

Did you Know?

- You may already be doing work that is addressing health disparities
- If you are working with any of the vulnerable populations, you are in a position to make a difference
- The demographics and vulnerable populations vary from one VAMC to another - one size does NOT fit all
- You can take control of the activities pertinent to your region/facility and demographics.
- OHE wants to partner with you and learn about your best practices/work in health equity

Quotes on Health Disparity and/or Health inequity

- ❑ **The “Geography of Opportunity” – the spaces and places where people live, work, study, pray, and play powerfully shape health and life opportunities.**

Geography and Health – the U.S. Context and Health – Brian D.Smedley NIMHD summer 2013

- ❑ **HPI’s research, publications, activities, and projects are designed to accelerate progress beyond listing and analyzing a litany of health disparities. Rather, they are directed toward collective strategies that will produce real change—and real opportunities for health. --**

<http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/>

VHA Office of Health Equity – Get involved!

- The pursuit of Health Equity *should be* everyone's business.
- It is a journey that takes time and effort.
- What can you do today in your area of influence to improve health equity?
- At a minimum - in all your actions - *do not* increase the disparity.

Thank you!

Useful Links:

CFP VA Health Equity Supplement

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/>.

National Partnership for Action (NPA)

<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/>

The Economic Burden of Health Inequalities in the United States

www.jointcenter.org/hpi

Office of Health Equity

<http://vaww.pdush.med.va.gov/programs/ohe/oheDefault.aspx>

Question/Comments...

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<http://vaww.pdush.med.va.gov/programs/ohe/oheDefault.aspx>

Do you have Implicit (Unconscious) Bias?

- Take the test @

- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>

