



HEALTH EQUITY DEFINITION

OPCA Health Equity Committee

Health equity is when all people can reach their full health potential and well-being. It is when disadvantages based on differences in race, ethnicity, language, ability, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, geographic location (i.e. rural vs. urban), intersections among these communities or identities, or other socially determined circumstances are mitigated and, ultimately, eliminated.

“ IN ACTION, HEALTH EQUITY IS STRENGTHS-BASED AND REQUIRES AN EMPOWERMENT MINDSET ”

Health equity is both a practice and a goal, centered on dismantling oppressive systems, cultures, and structures. All work towards equity must align itself with an anti-racist paradigm and must account for Medically Underserved Areas/Populations. In action, health equity is strengths-based and requires an empowerment mindset – while communities may experience disparities and inequities, they are the experts of their own experience and carry with them wisdom and solutions.

Health Equity Definition: Extended

It is vital to note that disadvantages based on differences are not due to deficiencies or attributes inherent to individuals who hold those identities; rather, health inequities exist because of historical undermining of personhood of those identities and communities which persist and create health differences which are unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, and unjust. To fully embrace and pursue health equity requires centering racism as a root cause of health inequities, specifically in our United States context and colonial history, as it places people of color at greater risk for poor health outcomes.

While it is not the responsibility of communities impacted by health inequities to solve these problems, community-based approaches, and amplification of existing efforts to enhance equity are vital to create sustainable, systemic change. Excluded groups must be part of planning and implementing actions to achieve greater health equity. Honoring communities' rights to power and autonomy when it has been historically denied them should be a priority of any type of equity work. Redistributing resources, power, land, and wealth are ways of beginning to rectify historical and contemporary harm and injustice.



This document and sources used to develop it can be found through the QR code above.