Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Care

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https://voice.dts.edu/article/how-to-seek-unity-in-diversity-first-steps-elizabeth-woodson
# Presentation Overview

- Race & Ethnicity Definitions
- Impact of Race and Racism on Health
- A Tale of Two Drug Epidemics
- Racial Disparities in the Opioid Epidemic
- How to Overcome the Racial Disparities
Race & Ethnicity Definitions
Race

How do you define race?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/the-myth-of-race/p0957s4f
“Race is a fluid concept used to group people according to various factors including, ancestral background and social identity.

Race is also used to group people that share a set of visible characteristics, such as skin color and facial features.

Though these visible traits are influenced by genes, the vast majority of genetic variation exists within racial groups and not between them.

Race is an ideology and for this reason, many scientists believe that race should be more accurately described as a social construct and not a biological one.”

https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Race
Ethnicity

How do you define ethnicity?

Ethnicity

“A group of people who share a similar culture (beliefs, values, and behaviors), language, religion, ancestry, or other characteristic that is often handed down from one generation to the next.

They may come from the same country or live together in the same area.”

Impact of Race and Racism on Health
The coronavirus pandemic is projected to increase the life expectancy gap between Black and white Americans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Life Expectancy at Birth</th>
<th>Estimated Life Expectancy During COVID-19 Pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80 years</td>
<td>White 78 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>75 years</td>
<td>Black 73 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded
Source: PNAS, October 2020

What race/ethnicity in the US population had the greatest decline in life expectancy during 2020?
Hispanic

3 year decrease despite 1.5 year decrease overall in the US

What were the cause of the differences?

**Social Determinants of Health**

- Neighborhood and physical environment
- Health and healthcare access
- Occupation and job conditions
- Income and wealth
- Education
- Transportation

Racism as a Public Health Crisis

https://www.ptonline.com/articles/finding-root-causes-of-a-material-problem
What comes to mind when you think of the word racism?
"Racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call "race"), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources."

-- APHA Past-President Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD

Institutionalized v. Interpersonally Mediated v. Internalized Racism
Institutionalized Racism

- Initial historical insult
- Structural barriers
- Inaction in the face of need
- Condoned by societal norms
- Biological determinism
- Unearned privilege

Interpersonally Mediated Racism

- Unintentional
- Intentional
- Acts of commission
- Acts of omission
- Maintains structural barriers
- Condoned by social norms

Racism Example: Microaggressions

What type of racism is a microagression?
What type of racism would you classify police brutality?
Internalized Racism

Reflects system of privilege

Reflects societal values

Erodes individual sense of value

Undermines collective action

Racism is Stressful

This stress impacts both physical and mental health
A Tale of Two Drug Epidemics
Powder v. "Crack" Cocaine
Cocaine Epidemic

Powder Cocaine

- Associated with white elite
- Light enforcement and sentencing

“Crack” Cocaine

- Associated with black urban areas
- Driver of the “War on Drugs”, mass incarceration

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4533860/
SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE MATH

\[
\frac{5 \text{ grams}}{\text{Crack Cocaine}} = 5 \text{ years} \neq \frac{500 \text{ grams}}{\text{Powder Cocaine}} = 5 \text{ years}
\]
Racial Disparities in the Opioid Epidemic
RISE IN OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS IN AMERICA

A Multi-Layered Problem in Three Distinct Waves

NEARLY 500,000 PEOPLE DIED FROM AN OPIOID OVERDOSE (1999-2019)

1990s mark a rise in prescription opioid overdose deaths

Rx OPIOIDS Include natural, semi-synthetic, and methadone and can be prescribed by doctors

2010 marks a rise in heroin overdose deaths

HEROIN An illegal opioid

2013 marks a rise in synthetic opioid overdose deaths

SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS Include fentanyl and can be illicitly made

Learn more about the evolving opioid overdose crisis: www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose

https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/data/analysis-resources.html
“Whitewashing” of the Opioid Epidemic

What is another drug epidemic that has been met with inaction based on the racial/ethnic demographics of the population that has been affected?
Public Health Approach to the Opioid Epidemic

- Expand treatment access, including medication-assisted treatment
- Healthcare systems integration
- Use of peer recovery specialists
- Modification of opioid prescribing practices
- Criminal diversion programs
- Person-centered recovery focus
- Social determinant focus
- Drug prevention activities
- Improve engagement
- Harm reduction expansion
- Use of evidence-based therapy treatments

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7286889/
Opioid Disparities in Treatment

Black death rates disproportionately increased in 2018-2019

Blacks are less likely to access buprenorphine

Pandemic opioid spike disproportionately affected blacks

https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/09/10/1035445899/black-opioid-overdose-deaths-increasing-faster-than-whites-study-finds
Racial Double Standard in Drug Laws Persists Today

12.09.19

Editorial: The 1980s crack epidemic was a fork in the road. America chose racism and prisons over public health
How to Overcome Racial Disparities
What is the difference between health equality v. health equity?
Health Equality

v.

Health Equity

https://www.ptonline.com/articles/finding-root-causes-of-a-material-problem
Social Determinants of Health

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Racism as a Public Health Crisis Declarations

https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health/racism-declarations
Strategies to Overcome the Social Determinants of Health Associated with Structural Racism

- Be intentional about being inclusive
- Maintain a trauma informed and mental health inclusive approach
- Be sensitive to the stress of race, racism, and associated stigma
- Work to become culturally competent
- Increase the culturally/linguistically matched workforce (including peers)
- Don’t assume that the presence of treatment/recovery services will be utilized/effectively accessed
- Identify personal biases to prevent additional stigma
Thank You

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