Structural Racism and Health

August 25, 2015
Linda Rae Murray M.D., MPH, F.A.C.P.
LOOKING FOR Causes in all the WRONG PLACES

POVERTY
ACCESS TO CARE
ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE
RACISM

WHY IS HE LOOKING AT RISK FACTORS AND BEHAVIORS WHEN THE KEY LIES IN SOCIAL DETERMINANTS?

LOOKING IN A DIFFERENT PLACE FOR THE KEY
A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.  

*From: Aspen Institute*
Structural Racism

• Historical context
  – Historical trauma

• Politics/Public Policies

• Address Institutional Racism

• Health Care workforce
  – Underrepresented Majority
  – Cultural competence
  – language
GENOCIDE of First Nations

- Indian Removal Act 1830
- Continual breaking of treaties
- U.S. Army responsible for providing health care
- Indian Health Service established 1955
Historical Trauma

Trauma in Indian Country

- Oppression
  - Accidental Death
  - Violence
  - Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Domestic/Family Violence
- Incarceration
- Substance Abuse
- Historical Events
- Suicide
- Poverty

D. S. BigFoot-2007
“Scientific Conclusion”

• “This table (of disease data) either teaches that slave labor is inimical to the procreation of the Species from exposure, violent exercise, etc. or as the planters believe, the blacks are possessed of a secret by which they destroy the fetus at an early stage of gestation .. In philosophizing upon this immense difference we are led to the conclusion from the facts within our knowledge, that it originates from the unnatural tendency of the African female to destroy her offspring.”

Pendleton (1840) Statistics of Disease
Historical Overview of African Americans 1619-2015

- **Slavery**
  - 1640 - 1863
  - 244 yrs = 62%

- **Reconstruction & Jim Crow**
  - 1863 - 1965
  - 102 yrs = 26%

- **Post-Civil Rights 1965 - 2012**
  - 47 yrs = 12%
Who is an immigrant?
Lynching of Mexicans

- During the same historical period as lynchings in the Southern States against Blacks.
- RATE of lynchings of Mexicans (and Mexican Americans) estimated to be similar to Blacks.
- This history is generally not known.
- Others (e.g. Chinese, Native Americans) were frequently lynched.
Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

- Prohibited immigration of Chinese
- Special treatment of
  - Immigrants of color
Impact of Occupational Injuries

-15%

Workers earn $31,000 (15%) less over 10 years following an injury².
Racial, Ethnic Wealth Gaps Have Grown Since Great Recession

Median net worth of households, in 2013 dollars

Notes: Blacks and whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Chart scale is logarithmic; each gridline is ten times greater than the gridline below it. Great Recession began Dec. '07 and ended June '09. Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Survey of Consumer Finances public-use data

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
A conceptual model of the relationship between racism and health

Source: Paradies et al; Systemic Reviews 2013 2:85
STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

SOCIOECONOMIC POLITICAL CONTEXT
- Governance
- Macroeconomic Policies
- Social Policies (Labour market, Housing, Land)
- Public Policies, Education, Health, Social protection,
- Culture and Societal value

Social Determinants of Health

Socioeconomic Position
- Education
- Occupation
- Income

Social Class
- Gender
- Ethnicity (racism)

Social cohesion & Social Capital

Material Circumstances
- (Living and Working, Conditions, Food Availability, etc.)

Behaviors and Biological Factors

Psychosocial Factors

Health System

IMPACT ON EQUITY IN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health