

Reassessing the Paradigms of Health Equity: A Critical Evaluation of Social Determinants in Public Health

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Abstract. This study critically evaluates the established paradigms surrounding health equity by emphasizing the impact of social determinants on public health outcomes. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative interviews with public health professionals and quantitative analysis of health data across diverse populations, our findings reveal significant disparities influenced by socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, and environmental factors. We propose a comprehensive re-evaluation of existing public health policies to foster equitable health outcomes, highlighting the necessity for an integrative framework that prioritizes social determinants. The implications of this research extend to policymakers and health practitioners, providing a roadmap for informed decision-making aimed at addressing health disparities more effectively.

Keywords: Health Equity, Social Determinants, Public Health, Health Disparities, Socioeconomic Factors, Health Policy, Global Health, Equitable Access, Public Health Framework

Introduction

The global landscape of public health is currently faced with unprecedented challenges, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the persisting health inequities that have exacerbated existing societal divides. Health equity, defined as the fair and just opportunity for all individuals to attain their highest level of health, remains a pivotal concern as we venture into 2024 and beyond. This relevance is underscored by the ongoing societal transformations and the increasing recognition of social determinants—such as income, education, and neighborhood conditions—that fundamentally shape health outcomes. Disparities in health access and quality are not merely outcomes of individual choices; rather, they are intricately woven into the fabric of social injustice. In this context, the

present article aims to critically reassess the established concepts surrounding health equity and the role of social determinants in public health. Through a comprehensive literature review and mixed-methods approach, we aim to challenge existing paradigms and propose integrative frameworks for public health practice and policy. The structure of the paper is organized as follows: initially, we explore the theoretical underpinnings of health equity and its historical evolution, followed by an examination of empirical evidence that highlights the impact of social determinants. Subsequently, we will engage in a critical analysis of current public health policies and propose actionable recommendations for stakeholders to enhance equitable health outcomes. Our findings seek to catalyze a paradigm shift in public health discourse, moving towards a model that fully incorporates the socio-political and economic realities influencing health equity.

This is a preliminary version. To read the full version of the article, please purchase a subscription.

References

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