

Implications, solutions for US health disparities discussed

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Catherine Dower, J.D., from the University of California in San Francisco, reviewed recent research on [health disparities](#) in the United States, the implications on policy, and direction of future research.

According to the report, health varies at a county level, and according to characteristics such as race and gender. Disparities are also associated

with ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, education, income, and social class. Many disparities can be prevented. Policies can be targeted toward three main categories of preventable disparities: modifiable behaviors such as smoking, diet, and exercise; social, cultural, and physical environments; and health care, including system organization and actions of [health care providers](#). Policy makers are trying to translate findings into effective policy solutions, including public health efforts such as vaccination, safer workplaces, and communicable disease control. Other areas that may help reduce disparities include use of public health and policy to address modifiable behaviors; focusing on the role of primary care in reducing inequalities in health and on addressing modifiable behaviors; and improving patient engagement and [health literacy](#).

"The results of these investments will be inherently hard to measure, and the path forward will likely involve multiple approaches," Dower writes. "Few would argue, however, against the need to find ways to close the gaps and to advance [health equity](#) within the United States."

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