

ATS and ERS publish policy statement on disparities in respiratory health

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To address the global phenomenon of disparities in respiratory health, the American Thoracic Society and the European Respiratory Society have released an official policy statement in which each pledges its commitment to reducing health disparities between the lowest and highest socioeconomic groups by continuing or initiating work with leaders from governments, academia, and other organizations to promote scientific inquiry and training, disseminate medical information and best practices, and monitor and advocate for public respiratory health.

The statement appears in the October 1 *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.

ATS Past President Dean Schraufnagel, MD, the senior deputy editor of the *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*, served as lead author of the writing committee. "Respiratory diseases disproportionately affect socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and certain ethnic groups in both the United States and Europe," Dr. Schraufnagel says. "The morbidity and mortality associated with these disparities takes a huge toll, especially on children."

Klaus Rabe, MD, writing committee member and a past president of ERS, continued: "The effects of [health disparities](#) in Europe on respiratory disease are very pronounced. Individuals in lower social groups are not only more likely to have [respiratory diseases](#), but, compared with other disorders, social inequality is associated with a larger proportion of deaths from these diseases."

ATS and ERS efforts to address health disparities include:

- Increasing the numbers of under-represented minorities in adult and pediatric pulmonary and critical care medicine in North America.
- Raising the level of pulmonary specialist education to a uniform, high-level across the European Union.
- Support of programs that educate the public about activities such as smoking and drug-addiction and rare diseases that affect only a portion of the population to improve the access of afflicted individuals to appropriate care.
- Support of broad access of patients with respiratory disease to specialists and greater access to health care and other national programs designed to reduce health care inequalities.
- Support of comprehensive tobacco-control strategies at both the state and national level.
- Advocating for and raising awareness of the importance of clean and safe air and promoting inquiry into the effects of climate change on respiratory health.
- Developing programs to educate professionals and policy-makers to reduce disparities in [respiratory](#) health.
- Working with the World Health Organization and other societies, agencies, and organizations to eliminate disparities in [respiratory health](#) and other noncommunicable diseases.

"Addressing these inequalities is at the core of the missions of our societies," says ATS President Patricia Finn, MD, who helped draft the policy.

Provided by American Thoracic Society

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