

Study: Social needs intervention research lacking in race and ethnicity analyses

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A new paper published in the Jan. 19, 2023, online edition of *JAMA Network Open* looks at how social needs intervention research recognizes race and ethnicity, which according to the study authors, are social, not biological concepts.

The study, led by Crystal Wiley Cené, MD, MPH, Chief Administrative Officer of Health Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at UC San Diego Health, was conducted with a team of researchers at UC San Diego Health, University of Chicago, University of California San Francisco and Research Triangle Institute International.

Health and quality of life are fundamentally influenced by "social determinants of health" a phrase that, simply put, encompasses where people are born, live, work, play and worship. Social determinants of health, such as [financial stability](#), education, housing, transportation and [food security](#), affect health and well-being.

The research team sought to answer: To what extent do studies of social needs interventions recognize and account for underlying, historic inequities and do minoritized racial and [ethnic groups](#) benefit more from social needs interventions?

The researchers found:

- Out of the 152 studies involving multiracial or multiethnic populations, 44 actually included race or [ethnicity](#) in their analyses
- Only 21 were "analytically informative"
- Only four were "conceptually thoughtful" about what race or

ethnicity means

- Future work should use a theoretically sound conceptualization of how [race](#), as a proxy for racism, affects social determinants of health and use this understanding to ensure social needs interventions benefit minoritized racial and ethnic groups

"Social needs interventions can address structural causes of health disparities," said Cené. "But without understanding the role of racism or how it may differentially impact outcomes, these interventions may be less effective within racially minoritized populations."

More information: Crystal W. Cené et al, Racial Health Equity and Social Needs Interventions, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.50654](#)

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