
**Back to Basics: Reemphasizing Social
Determinants in Public Health Education**

CEDHL Conference on Social Determinants of Health
Workforce Development Panel Presentation
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Operating Premise

In order to promote optimal health for all and achieve health equity the public health discipline must focus on social determinants both in practice and research. The educational curricula and research of academic public health programs should align with this tenet.

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- “Tell me where a man lived and I will foretell the manner of his passing”. (ascribed to one of the ancient Greek philosophers)
 - There is ample evidence of the link between social determinants of health and health outcomes.
 - “Inequalities in health status in the U.S. are large, persistent , and increasing. Research documents that poverty, income and wealth inequality, poor quality of life, racism, sex discrimination, and low socioeconomic conditions are the major risk factors for ill health and health inequalities.....” ***NACCHO Health and Social Justice Committee***
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HP 2010

Healthy People 2010 recognizes that communities, States and national organizations will need to take a multidisciplinary approach to achieving healthy equity – an approach that involves improving health, education, housing, labor, justice, transportation, agriculture, and the environment.

HP 2010

Goal 1: Increase Quality and Years of Healthy Life

- The first goal of Health People 2010 is to help individuals of all ages increase life expectancy *and* improve their quality of life.

Goal 2: Eliminate Health Disparities

- The second goal of Healthy People 2010 is to eliminate health disparities among segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation.
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Association of Schools of Public Health MPH Core Competency Development Project

Discipline Specific Core Competencies

- Biostatistics
- Environmental Health Sciences
- Epidemiology
- Health Policy and Management
- Social and Behavioral Sciences

Interdisciplinary/Cross-Cutting Core Competencies

- Communication and Informatics
 - Diversity and Culture
 - Leadership
 - Public Health and Biology
 - Professionalism
 - Program Planning
 - Systems Thinking
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Health Disparities in MPH Curriculum

“Public health schools and programs should teach all students about the existence of, reasons for, and means for eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities to increase the competence of all graduate public health students with regards to cultural and other issues that affect racial and ethnic health disparities”

ASPH Health Disparities Report

Health Disparities in MPH Curriculum

It is increasingly important that a new graduate with an MPH can perform the following:

- Describe the roles of history, power, privilege, and structural inequality in producing health disparities
- Explain how professional ethics and practices relate to equity and accountability in diverse community settings
- Explain why cultural competence alone cannot address health disparities
- Discuss the importance and characteristics of a sustainable, diverse public health workforce
- Use the basic concepts and skills involved in culturally appropriate community engagement and empowerment with diverse communities
- Apply the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR) to improve health in diverse populations
- Differentiate among availability, acceptability, and accessibility of health care across diverse populations
- Differentiate among linguistic competence, cultural competency, and health literacy in public health practice
- Cite examples of situations where consideration of culture-specific needs resulted in a more effective modification or adaptation of a health intervention
- Develop public health programs and strategies that respond to the diverse cultural values and traditions of the communities being served

From the [MPH Core Competency Development Project](#)

Research to Eliminate Health Disparities

- Research that documents racial and ethnic health disparities can play a key role in understanding and eliminating such disparities.
- Encourage collaborations that equitably involve multiple principal investigators from communities with racial and ethnic health disparities in the development, implementation, and evaluation of CBPR focused on racial and ethnic health disparities.

ASPH Health Disparities Report

MPH Degree Programs in CT

Yale University School of Public Health Mission and Vision (abridged)

*The School of Public Health at Yale University provides leadership to protect and improve the health of the public.... **Our vision of the future** is one in which we help to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health; harness the power of the genome to prevent infectious and chronic diseases; and develop comprehensive programs to prevent diseases such as cancer.*

- Elective courses on health disparities (health care systems and chronic disease)
 - All students take a social behavioral course as core requirement (social determinants addressed in these courses)
 - Disparities addressed in some other courses, e.g., psycho/social and behavioral epidemiology
 - Faculty conducting research related to health disparities (disease specific...HIV, Cancer, CVD, etc.)
 - Community Alliance for Research and Engagement
 - Center for Public Health Preparedness (focus on “vulnerable” populations)
 - Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS (CBR)
 - Prevention Research Center (CBPR)
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MPH Degree Programs in CT (continued)

Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU)

The Mission of Southern Connecticut State University Public Health Program (MPH and BS) is to promote its vision of "healthy people in healthy communities," a vision that implies social justice and health equity through: instruction that contributes to a diverse, competent public health workforce trained for entry and advanced positions in public health.; service that promotes qualified, collective action to promote and protect the health of the public; and research that advances the science and practice of public health.

- SCSU program on ecological end of spectrum
 - Primary prevention is pervading theme
 - Both MPH and BS identified as health promotion programs
 - Working toward health equity through social change is thematic
 - Social determinants integrated throughout MPH curriculum
 - Cultural competency workshop requirement for incoming MPH students
 - Core courses address ecological determinants of health
 - Practicum focused on applied community-defined public health projects/research
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MPH Degree Programs in CT (continued)

University of Connecticut MPH Program

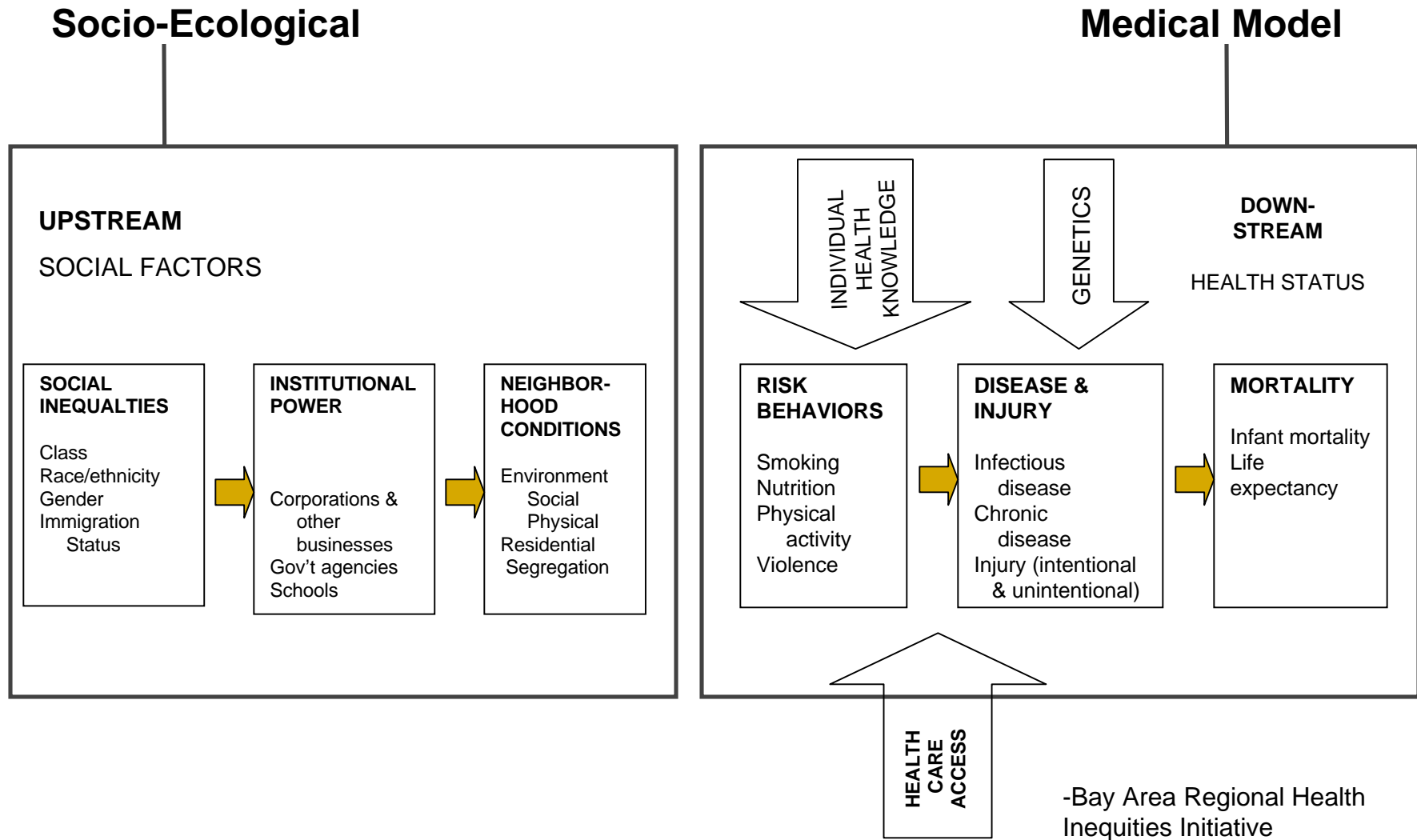
The MPH Program's mission is to prepare public health professionals to achieve high standards of leadership through exemplary education, public service, and research.

- Students expected to understand social underpinnings of health as core requirement of program
 - Practicum focused on health disparities and real CT issue, e.g., youth violence
 - Designate % of capstone projects focus on disparities and/or GH
 - All students take Social and Behavioral Foundations of Health
 - Some Epidemiology courses examine population health differences
 - Public health faculty research focused on population health
 - CEHDL – CBR Research
 - Center for Health Interventions and Prevention (CHIP) –CBR research
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The ASPH Health Disparities Report addressed the following three objectives as a means of introducing racial and ethnic health disparities into public health school curricula:

- *Ensure that all degree program curricula address the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities (e.g., offer an elective course that focuses on racial and ethnic health disparities; create or maintain a minimum of one module, section, or case study that teaches students about racial and ethnic health disparities in one or more required courses).*
 - *Develop practica placements and activities for students that include opportunities to learn about, and work toward, the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities (in general and specifically in relation to policy issues).*
 - *Offer in-house seminars for faculty, staff, and students to bring visibility to racial and ethnic health disparities issues.*
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Paradigm Shifting: From Medical to Ecological Model



Paradigm Shifting: From Medical to Ecological Model (Continued)

- MPH Programs/Schools are Diverse with Different Philosophies and Structures
 - Range of Emphasis on Ecological vs. Medical Model
 - Conflict with Medical Model and Health Equity Goal
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The Way Forward: Fully Incorporating Social Determinants and Health inequities into Curricula and Research

- Shift from Medical to Ecological Model of PH
 - Explicit focus on social determinants in curricula
 - Core requirements for all MPH students re. social determinants
 - Faculty orientation/recruitment of new faculty
 - Connection with PH Practice Community health equity initiatives (e.g.. CT Health Equity Alliance)
 - Practicum programs that emphasize social determinants and health equity
 - Community-University Research Partnerships focused on social determinants/structural/policy domain as well as biomedical and behavioral research foci
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