



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

August 2021 CCSS: Exploration of Innovations in Health Care

S06: Addressing Oral Health Inequities through Community Based Programs: Opportunities for Interprofessional Teams

Resource List

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published a webpage dedicated to the [Disparities in Oral Health](#) (2019). Oral health disparities among various age groups as well as disparities in oral cancer and gum disease are listed. The CDC is working to reduce disparities in the rate of cavities and integrate oral health programs into chronic disease prevention and medical care. The agency and its partners promote school sealant programs as well as community water fluoridation in efforts to prevent cavities and save money.

Disparities among dental visiting can be measured by comparing outcomes between groups (inequality) but can also consider concepts of social justice or fairness (inequity). The article, [Use of oral health care services in the United States](#) (2021), aims to assess differences in dental visiting in the United States in terms of both social inequality and inequity. Data was obtained from the 2015-2016 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). The findings indicate that use of oral health care is threatened by existing social inequalities and inequities, disproportionately burdening disadvantaged populations. The article concludes that efforts to reduce both oral health inequalities and inequities must start with action on the social, economic and policy spheres.

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) published objectives for the Healthy People 2030 campaign to improve health and well-being over the next decade. The [Increase use of the oral health care system](#) (n.d.) objective states that 43.3% of children, adolescents, and adults used the oral health care system in 2016. The target for this objective is to increase this number to 45.0% by 2030. Oral diseases cause pain and disability and some are linked to other diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Strategies to make it easier for people to obtain dental care are critical to improve oral health and overall health outcomes.

The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) Oral Health Strategic Framework](#) (2016) reflects on the collective deliberations and next steps proposed by HHS and other federal partners to realize the department's oral health vision and eliminate oral health disparities. The Framework builds upon and outlines a strategic alignment of HHS operating and staff divisions' resources, programs, and leadership commitments. This Framework serves as an essential resource to optimize the implementation of activities that are planned and underway, strengthen existing cross-agency collaboration, and identify new avenues for private-public partnerships by creating maximum synergy with other current federal and nonfederal oral health initiatives.



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