



Making New York the Healthiest State: Achieving the Triple Aim

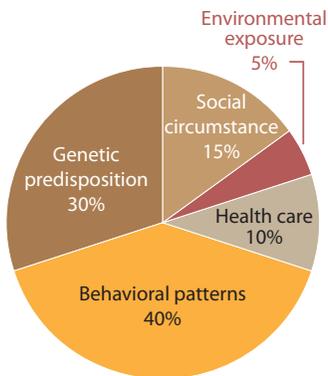
Population Health Summit

What is Population Health?

Population health refers to the health status and health outcomes within a group of people rather than considering the health of one person at a time. For public health practitioners, improving population health involves understanding and optimizing the health of a population broadly defined by geography. Health care providers, insurers and employers may consider population health to refer to their patient panel or insured members or employees. However, health reform encourages all sectors to think more broadly than the sum of the individuals' under their charge. This is because to improve population health it is necessary to influence the social determinants that affect health outcomes through population-wide policies and interventions that impact the determinants.

Many factors determine population health, which is shaped by the social determinants of health such as poverty, education and housing. Ensuring population health goes well beyond the clinical care, supports and services provided by the health care system to include the public health policies of government, the wellness plans in a corporation and the nutrition programs in a school district. Rather than focus on the treatment of chronic disease, policies that influence population health tend to emphasize prevention and wellness; the reduction or elimination of waste and the eradication of health disparities based on race, ethnicity, language, income, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other factors. The reasoning is that good health belongs to the whole, not just an individual.

Population health is one of the cornerstones of the Triple Aim, a rubric developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) that has become the centerpiece of the nation's efforts to reform the currently unsustainable health care delivery system. The Triple Aim also strives to improve individual patient care and lower the cost of health care. In order to transform the health system, all three imperatives must be met simultaneously.



Determinants of health and their contribution to premature death

Adapted from McGinnis JM, Williams-Russo P, Knickman JR. The case for more active policy attention to health promotion. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 2002;21:78-93

What Determines Health?

The U.S. spends \$2.7 trillion on health care, which accounts for 18% of our gross domestic product. Despite this extraordinary expenditure, only 10% of health outcomes can be traced to the health care delivery system. Approximately 60% is the result of our behaviors, which are shaped by where we live, the company we keep and the everyday choices we make. Those choices are predicated on what we call the social determinants of health. Whether we live in poverty, our housing situation, the level of our education, where we work and the schools we attend all affect our well-being in many ways. For instance, these factors determine the cleanliness of the air we breathe, our access to sidewalks and bike trails, and the presence of a workplace wellness program.

What is the Role of Public Health?

Public health, the set of approaches to improving health used by health departments and their community-based and academic partners, plays a major role in population health and has the power to influence the health and well-being of large groups in the population. Modern history is replete with examples of how public health initiatives have improved the health of entire populations. Simply having better living conditions, safer work environments, and access to clean air and water led to major improvements in the health of our country at the turn of the last century. More recent examples include lead abatement programs, smoking cessation efforts and water fluoridation.

What is the NYS Prevention Agenda?

The NYS Prevention Agenda 2013-2017 is an ambitious effort to make New York the healthiest state in the nation and focuses primarily on prevention and community-based efforts. The agenda has five overarching priorities: a) to prevent chronic diseases; b) to promote a healthy and safe environment; c) to promote healthy women, infants and children; d) to promote mental health and prevent substance abuse; and e) to prevent HIV, STDs, vaccine preventable diseases and health care-associated infections. Each priority has specific goals with measurable objectives, and takes into account the need to address health disparities, which continue to persist. The Prevention Agenda is the health improvement plan for New York State, and also forms the basis of mandated local county and hospital planning efforts that strive to improve population health.

What is our goal?

Improving population health requires the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders including government, providers, insurers, academia, employers and unions, the media, philanthropy, political leaders, community organizations and others. All stakeholders have a role in making population health a priority, in focusing on health disparities, and in adopting a “health-in-all policies” mindset to inform all decision-making. Working together, we can transform the environment we live and work in, to make our default choices the healthy ones.

References

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