INVITATION TO ATTEND

Methodological Issues in Measuring and Reporting Disparities

THE ACCESS STUDY GROUP

2011 ANNUAL MEETING OF APHA – Washington, DC (http://www.apha.org/meetings/)

DATE: Sunday, October 30, 2011
TIME: 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
PLACE: Grand Hyatt, Room: Farragut Square
(http://apha.confex.com/apha/139am/webprogram/MC.html, or http://apha.confex.com/apha/139am/schedule/index.cgi?password=daisy&EmailAddress=jweissman%40alum.mit.edu&page=browse&action=schedule&view=Session34113&srch=words%7CMethodologica%20Issues%20Method%7Cand%7Cpge%7Ccpe%7C1)

APHA: Appears in Program under Business Meetings as MC Section Study Group
SESSION #: 191.0 and 226.0

You are invited to attend this year's session of the Study Group on Access at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Washington, DC, under the aegis of the Committee on Health Services Research of the Medical Care Section.

Abstract: Disparities exist across all aspects of health and healthcare including specific conditions such as cancer and diabetes; types of care, and care settings. There is increasing clinical and policy focus on eliminating disparities in health care (the Affordable care Act) and health (Healthy People 2020 goals). Performance measurement, reporting, and monitoring play an important role in both assessing disparities and measuring progress in addressing them. However, there are many methodological issues and controversies related to measuring and reporting disparities and tracking change over time. Recently, the IOM released a report providing recommendations for standardizing data collection of race, ethnicity, and language, and both the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the Joint Commission published standards for improving quality among disparities populations. Given increased focus on measuring and reporting disparities through provisions in the Accountable Care Act and on implementing interventions aimed at eliminating disparities, solutions to these measurement issues are critical. Different approaches to measurement may result in different results.

This year's access study session will present new and innovative work that addresses these challenges including: absolute versus relative disparities and implications for static versus time trends; paired measures (e.g., white compared with black, white compared with Latino) versus summary indexes (disparities among all groups considered simultaneously); consideration of "directionality" (i.e., if vulnerable populations have higher quality of care than the majority population, is this considered a disparity and should action be taken?); comparisons across geographic areas or across indicators; sample size considerations; single vs. composite measures, risk adjustment and stratification; and consideration and measurement of disparities between and within providers (geographic variation). These measurement approaches have direct applicability to performance measurement and reporting, evaluation of promising interventions, and in monitoring progress. Strengths and limitations of different approaches will be discussed. A round table discussion with members of the session will follow presentations. The session is designed to be informal and highly interactive. This session is supported by the National Cancer Institute and the Aetna Foundation.

Session Objectives: 1. To understand methodologic issues related to measuring and reporting health disparities and implications for practice, policy, and research. 2. To understand new approaches and methods for measuring and monitoring health disparities and their applications. 3. To gain insight into how these approaches can be applied to the work of session participants.

Program agenda follows. Please R.S.V.P. to jweissman@partners.org or arlene.bierman@utoronto.ca so that we may send you advance materials. Space is Limited.
Welcome and Introduction – Co-Organizers
Arlene Bierman, MD, MS, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, St Michaels Hospital/University of Toronto
Joel Weissman, Ph.D., Center for Surgery and Public Health, Harvard/ Brigham and Women's Hospital

Joel Weissman, PhD –Policy Context to Disparities Measurement

Benjamin Cook, PhD, MPH, Senior Scientist, Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research, Instructor, Harvard Medical School;
Methodological and Conceptual Considerations Related to the Measurement of Racial/Ethnic Healthcare Disparities
Addressing racial/ethnic disparities in health care services is a policy priority. However, the evaluation of disparities-reducing initiatives is complicated by a lack of consensus in the definition of disparity and the tools used to measure them. In this presentation, we will discuss the Institute of Medicine definition of racial/ethnic healthcare disparities as a conceptually grounded framework for measuring and understanding disparities. We will review and compare a number of methods of implementation of this definition and highlight key issues and controversies in the measurement of healthcare disparities.

Alan Zaslavsky, PhD, Department of Health Care Policy, Harvard Medical School;
Disparities Within and Between Units -- Methods and Meaning
In a disparities study, the populations of interest are often associated with units relevant to their treatment processes and outcomes. Examples include geographical areas, health plans, and healthcare providers (hospitals, clinics, etc.). We consider methods for identifying the components of disparities attributable to differences within and between such units, as well as the possible normative and policy interpretations of these two components of disparities.

What is the effect of the way we express disparities numerically on the way we understand and express disparities? Commonly used summaries of disparities include absolute differences in rates, ratios of rates receiving a service, and ratios of rates NOT receiving the service. We show that these can lead to different results when making comparisons (over time, between measures or between places or institutions) if overall levels differ across units of comparison, and suggest interpretations of each of these forms of disparity measure.

LT David Huang, PhD, MPH, US Public Health Service, CDC/National Center for Health Statistics;
A New Online Tool for Measuring Disparities: HD Calc
The Health Disparities Calculator (HD*Calc) is statistical software designed to generate multiple summary measures to evaluate and monitor health disparities. HD*Calc was developed as an extension of SEER*Stat to expand the range of measures for evaluating health disparities related to cancer; however, since it can be used with any dataset, HD*Calc can be used in any research arena. We discuss the use of HD*Calc to generate four absolute and seven relative summary measures of disparity, based on cross-sectional and trend data. Results are displayed as tables and charts, which may be exported for use in other applications.

Wrap-up
Joel Weissman, Ph.D., Center for Surgery and Public Health, Harvard/ Brigham and Women's Hospital
Arlene Bierman, MD, MS, St Michaels Hospital/University of Toronto

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