

Does Race, Ethnicity, or Gender Matter in Health Care?

It all depends on you.

Our effectiveness as health care providers is increased by being attuned to when these factors impact the care we provide.

Given our increased ability to use technology to analyze multiple factors we are learning to tease out the intricacies of race, ethnicity, and gender in the research that drives our standards of care.

Each person's health profile reflects a combination of biology, heritage, habits, experiences, and the impact of social factors. Some of these change the expression of genetic factors, others increase the risk of certain conditions, and still others are protective.

Aggregated data provide a framework for the care and treatment we provide. But it has its limits. For example, use of the term 'minority' is not helpful as each group of people, including non-Hispanic whites, includes a variety of heritages.

While aggregated data provide valuable knowledge, it is the individual nuances of the patient in front of us that should drive clinical judgment. Looking at each person as an individual within a broader context is the refinement of the lessons learned from case studies.

Science and clinical research are providing an opportunity for us to recalibrate what we do based on what we now know and what we hope to discover. Our challenge is to be open to new clinical interventions to help achieve the best health for all.

Consider this:

- Even after the loss of years of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanics live longer than non-Hispanic whites.¹
- For Asian-Americans and Hispanics, cancer is the leading cause of death.²
- For persons who are African American or non-Hispanic white the leading cause of death is heart disease.³
- That Hispanics live longer than non-Hispanic whites has been called the Hispanic Paradox. These favorable trends are also found in 12 Latin American countries.⁴
- Black adults born in the U.S. have a higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease and other causes compared to Black U.S. immigrants.⁵
- Black and Hispanic women have higher rates of cervical cancer than non-Hispanic white women highlighting the importance of regular Pap screening.⁶

¹ Andrasfay T, Goldman N. Reductions in US life expectancy during the COVID-19 pandemic by race and ethnicity: Is 2021 a repetition of 2020? medRxiv [Preprint]. 2022 Jul 19:2021.10.17.21265117. doi: 10.1101/2021.10.17.21265117. PMID: 34704099; PMCID: PMC8547531 ² Heron M. Deaths: Leading causes for 2019. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 70 no 9. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:107021>. ³ Ibid ⁴ Yingxi Chen, MD, PhD; Neal D. Freedman, PhD; Erik J. Rodriguez, PhD; Meredith S. Shiels, PhD; Anna M. Napoles, PhD; Diana R. Withrow, PhD; Susan Spillane, PhD; Byron Sigel, MS; Eliseo J. Perez-Stable, MD; Amy Berrington de González, DPhil. Trends in Premature Deaths Among Adults in the United States and Latin America. JAMA Network Open February 12, 2020 ⁵ Looti, Alain Lekoubou, M.D Heart health in Black Americans: The 'healthy immigrant effect.' Presentation American Stroke Association 2022, New Orleans. LA <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/heart-health-in-black-americans-the-healthy-immigrant-effect> ⁶American Cancer Society. <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/#!/cancer-site/Cervix?module=g4elyv7V>:



Healthy America's Foundation
1501 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
healthyamericasfund.org