

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:

- Hispanic, Asian, and Black patients were less likely to have clinicians follow-up with test results.¹
- Even after the loss of years of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanics live longer than non-Hispanic Whites.²
- 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.³
- Black adults born in the U.S. had a higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease and other causes compared to Black U.S. immigrants.⁴
- During the pandemic 18.6 % of Hispanics of all races and 15.1% of Black non-Hispanic persons reported that they seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days. The rates were 7.9% for White non-Hispanics and 6.6% for Asian non-Hispanics.⁵
- A 2021 survey from America's Promise Alliance and Research for Action found that Hispanic high schoolers were the most likely of any racial/ethnic group to report poor or declining mental health in the past 30 days.⁶
- Hispanic smokers who visit a provider are 51% less likely to receive advice to quit smoking than non-Hispanic White adult smokers.⁷

¹ An Equity Agenda for the Field of Health Care Quality Improvement by Margaret O'Kane, Shantanu Agrawal, Leah Binder, Victor Dzau, Tejal K. Gandhi, Rachel Harrington, Kedar Mate, Paul McGann, David Meyers, Paul Rosen, Michelle Schreiber, and Dan Schummers Sept. 15, 2021 Discussion Paper. National Academy of Medicine. Washington, DC ² 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 ³ 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 ⁴ 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> ⁵ Czeisler MÉ, Lane RI, Petrosky E, et al. (2020). Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, June 24–30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1049–1057. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1> ⁶ Flanagan, SK; Margolius, M; Pileggi, M; Glaser, L; Burkander, K; Kincheloe, M; Freeman, J. (2021). Where Do We Go Next? Youth Insights on the High School Experience During a Year of Historic Upheaval. American's Promise Alliance and Research for Action. <https://www.americaspromise.org/wheredowegonext> ⁷ Stephen Babb, MPH; Ann Malarcher, PhD; Kat Asman, MSPH; Michelle Johns, MA, MPH; Ralph Caraballo, PhD, MPH; Brenna VanFrank, MD, MSPH; Bridgette Garrett, PhD. Disparities in Cessation Behaviors Between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White Adult Cigarette Smokers in the United States, 2000–2015. Prev Chronic Dis. 2020;17(1):e10.



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