Global Health Disparities: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introductory Remarks

- **Thanks**
  - I would like to thank Vice Chancellor, Dr. Nigel Harris and our University of the West Indies colleagues for the hospitality shown to my team and I during the past three days of our site visit.
  - Also... special thanks to Dean Archibald McDonald, the faculty and staff of the medical school for hosting my talk on health disparities.

- **My Presentation will:**
  - Briefly review the changing global health landscape
  - Discuss some demographics that illustrate persistence health disparities in the US and sub-Saharan Africa
  - Identify some of the 21st century challenges and opportunities that health professionals must grapple with, and
  - Share with you the mission of a new UWI-Sullivan Alliance collaboration, *The Caribbean Alliance for Health Disparities Research*
Global Health: Changing Demographics - Persistent Disparities

■ Working definition of Health Disparities:
  • “Gaps” in the physical and mental well-being of the most privileged and the least privileged/disadvantaged in any society.”

■ Global Scenario
  • Global population is currently approximately 6.4 billion
  • Despite prosperity and health sciences advances health disparities persists among nations and at local levels
  • For example in the US - Life Expectancy in 1900 was 47 years, in 2010 it was 77.6 years

■ Wide range of health disparities
  • In some countries: infectious diseases drive health disparities
  • In others: Non Communicable Diseases - cancer, cardiovascular disease
Persistent Disparities: The Evidence

- Beginning late 1990, health sciences research evidence has
  - Linked social equity and disease patterns
  - Made social determinants of health a major global health focus

- Social determinants of health
  - Has become a central focus for lessening health disparities at global, national and local levels
  - Eighty three (83%) of the Earth’s population live in developing societies
  - Extreme poverty exists for estimated 1.1 billion people globally
  - Infant mortality has improved for most of the world, however
  - Sub-Saharan African population explosion portends critical global health problems for countries such as Nigeria.

- In developed countries
  - Non Communicable Diseases are the major challenges to health equity

- In developing countries
  - Communicable diseases still a major issue - NCDs are rapidly increasing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1900 (CDC-MMWR, 1999)</th>
<th>2010 (Health, United States, 2010)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diarrhea and Enteritis</td>
<td>Stroke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
<td>Unintentional injuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>Homicide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liver Disease</td>
<td>Certain conditions in the perinatal period</td>
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The Evidence:
U.S. Age-adjusted Mortality Rates by Race-Ethnicity (1949-2000)


1 Data for Hispanics is based on estimates
The Evidence:
U.S. Life Expectancy at Birth by Race-Gender (1900-2000)

Expected years of life remaining

The Evidence:
Number of People Age 65 and Over U.S. (1900-2050)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Population Estimates and Projections
OECD Countries:
Live Expectancy at Birth in Years

Source: OECD Factbook, 2011
Obesity Trends in the Developed World

Source: OECD, 2012
Comparative Infant Mortality Rates
2008

Source: CDC- Health United States, 2010
Global Challenges: Health Cost as Part of GDP (OECD Countries-2009)

Source: OECD, 2012
Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing Population – Global Problem

Fertility Rates and Cultural Factors:

- **Asia and Latin America**
  - Fertility rates are declining (2 children per woman)

- **Sub-Saharan Africa**
  - Now accounts for 12 per cent of the world’s population
  - By 2100 will account for 33 percent of the world's population

- **Nigeria**
  - Population (currently 167 million) increaser could outstrip economic expansion
  - By the year 2027: 300 million people will inhabit Lagos
  - Population has nearly doubled over 15 years to 21 million
Fertility Rates
As the region develops, fertility is not dropping as quickly as it did in other parts of the world.

Population Projections
The region's population is expected to grow to one-third of the world's total by 2100.

US Challenges for the 21st Century

1. Improved access to health services for all

2. More comprehensive/more effective health promotion/disease prevention programs and improved health behavior of Americans

3. Increased number, and greater diversity, of health professionals, including mid-level providers in our inner cities and rural area
4. More efficient, less bureaucratic organization of the health system and health services

5. Less political ideology and fewer legal intrusions into the health system

6. Maintenance of the highest ethical standards in the health system, including codes of personal professional conduct

7. Protecting and preserving humanism in the health professions
Accepting the Education Challenge: 
*The Morehouse Mystique*

The story of the Morehouse School of Medicine reflects the turbulent time in which it was founded and the lofty goals and accomplishments of a diverse group of African American leaders. Their tireless efforts in creating this eminent Black institution changed the landscape of medical education and the racial and ethnic makeup of physicians and health care professions.

*Forward written by Barbara Bush*
Global Challenges: No Single Big Idea

- **One Size Does Not Fit All**
- **We need:**
  - Population-based research to tailor evidence-based programs for specific communities
  - Sustained collaborations to learn from each other. **On good example is our five-year USCAHDR project designed to study social determinant of health among Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American populations.**
  - Multidisciplinary approaches: educators, researchers, stakeholders, and implementers, governmental-nongovernmental policy makers to work in teams
  - Expansion of the educational opportunities to educate a new cadre of health professionals trained in the major concepts and skills in delivering “indigenous”, value-based health care
Global Challenge: Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

- 2011 United Nations NCDs Meeting
  - NCDs challenges are changing the global health landscape
    - 300 million lives over the past decade
    - 63% of deaths in the world today are from NCDs
    - 90% of these deaths in low-middle income countries
    - 30% if these deaths occur during working years (below 60 years of age)
  - Leading causes of death
    - Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, chronic lung disease
  - Risk factors: tobacco, obesity, alcoholism
  - Low-Middle-income countries experience faster NCD burden
  - NCDs are driving up health care costs around the globe
Opportunities

- Use 21st century information technologies for continuous health assessment and knowledge transfer
- Take public health action to prevent/control NCDs
- Establish international collaborations to:
  - Expand health disparities research knowledge
  - Develop sound evidence to craft and implement governmental/non-governmental policies

For Example: US Caribbean Alliance for Health Disparities Reduction Research Cooperative Agreement

- University of the West Indies
- Sullivan Alliance to Transform the Health Professions
- National Institute on Minority Health and Heath Disparities
Goal: to build a lasting US-Caribbean health disparities research partnership

Do epidemiological research on:

- Similarities and differences among English speaking US and Caribbean populations of African descent
- Explore how this knowledge advances current our thinking about determinants of health:
  - History-ancestry, health practices, life styles, health disparities in the US and the Caribbean
- Use communication to promote healthy life styles
References

- U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Population EsOECD, Factbook, 2012
- CDC- Estimates and Projections. 2012
- Health United States, 2010
- OECD Factbook, 2011
- WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health Final Report, Closing the Gap in a Generation, 2011
- 2011 United Nations Summit, NCDs