

EARLY STAGE INVESTIGATORS: EMERGING RESEARCH SUPPORTING HEALTH EQUITY

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¹ Department of Public Health Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC

² Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, Baltimore, MD

Address correspondence to Sandra Echeverria, PhD, MPH, Department of Public Health Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; seecheve@uncg.edu, or Eberechukwu Onukwugha, PhD, MS, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy; eonukwug@rx.umaryland.edu

WELCOME

When we envisioned the theme for this special issue in early 2019, we had no idea that our world would be besieged by the COVID-19 pandemic and that a new national reckoning would emerge on the effects of racism on people of color, especially as experienced in Black people's lives. Then again, these developments are in large part why we commissioned this special call. We wanted to support the new wave of scholars dedicating their careers to health equity research. As women of color in academia who have followed this calling, we know all too well the demands that this career path entails and the challenges faced in representing topics and communities we deeply care about. Albeit from an academic circle, we stand up with current movements to say we 'see' you. Your work matters, and you matter.

IN THIS ISSUE

The manuscripts selected for this two-part special issue represent the research of scholars whose work focuses on examining health equity for various racial/ethnic groups and from distinct disciplinary backgrounds. The

Sandra Echeverria, PhD, MPH¹
Associate Editor, *Ethnicity & Disease*
Eberechukwu Onukwugha, PhD, MS²
Associate Editor, *Ethnicity & Disease*

selection process was difficult as more than 100 scholars answered our call. We were, however, limited to selecting only a few articles from the high-quality submissions received and will require two issues to publish all manuscripts. In this first part of the themed issue, you will find articles published in four broad categories: 1) Sexual,

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Reproductive and Perinatal Health; 2) Mental Health Across the Lifecourse; 3) Preventing Cardiovascular and Other Chronic Diseases; and 4) Health Care Delivery and Costs. These studies push new ideas forward and bring to light populations often at the margins of public health re-

search and prevention efforts. For example, Toller Erausquin et al¹ address the sexual and reproductive health of Latinx immigrant men living in the southern region of the United States. Manze and Romero² rethink what pregnancy ‘intentions’ means, while Janevic et al³ give voice to diverse immigrant women by using qualitative methods to record women’s perceptions of discrimination during childbirth. Lastly, Romano and colleagues⁴ assess the appropriateness of recommended guidelines for triggering di-

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agnostic biopsy for endometrial cancer among US Black women and found that the thresholds performed poorly.

This issue also provides new evidence on how “race/ ethnicity,” as a marker for racism, exclusion, and stigmatization, increases risk of chronic health conditions, as well as mental health disparities. As an example, Misra et al⁵ found varying levels of depression across distinct Asian American groups while Allen et al⁶ advance new understanding on the role of coping strategies and physiologic and psychologic responses among African American men. Sterling et al⁷ highlight the

hidden contributions of home care workers, often women of color, in caring for patients with heart failure while Fuster et al⁸ present novel data on the potential role of Hispanic/Latinx restaurants in reducing cardiovascular risk. Cassel et al⁹ round out this category by examining cancer risk behaviors among Pacific Islanders in Hawaii.

This themed issue would not be complete without an examination of research on health care delivery and associated costs. Health equity perspectives on access, utilization, and costs provide important information about health care seeking and the burden of illness in diverse populations. Schiaffano et al¹⁰ provide novel information regarding the impact of culturally appropriate delivery of health services on length of stay. In separate articles, Brown¹¹ and Williams,¹² along with their colleagues, advance our understanding of race-based differences in health services utilization among individuals diagnosed with lupus and diabetes, respectively. In part two of this themed issue, we will highlight articles that further examine the role of life stressors in health as well as articles that explore the health effect of contextual factors, including work and school settings.

CONCLUSION

We congratulate these promising scholars for their enterprising research. Their work highlights the importance of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and scholarship in academia. To all the emerging scholars who applied to our call for papers and to those who will be inspired by these articles, we look forward to seeing your careers

develop as we build new understanding and action to keep all communities safe, healthy, and full of hope.

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