

Understanding Health Equity



Kidney disease affects people of all cultures and beliefs. Not everyone has the same opportunities for health, and sometimes it can be challenging to know how to best talk about and address this issue. This resource is meant to help you understand common terms when discussing health equity, which exists “when all people have a fair and just opportunity to be healthy.”

<i>Health Equity</i>	<i>Health Disparity</i>	<i>Social Determinants of Health</i>	<i>Cultural Competency</i>	<i>Cultural Humility</i>	<i>Health Equality</i>
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Terms to Know

¹**Health Equity** is when all people are able to receive the highest level of health. Health equity happens when everyone has a fair chance to get the best health regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age (over 65), how much money they have, where they live, or the language they speak.

²**Health Disparity** is a type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities negatively affect groups of people who have a history of having a hard time getting access to good health because of their race, belief, income, sexual orientation, etc.

³**Social Determinants of Health** are non-medical factors that impact health outcomes. Examples of non-medical factors include education, food insecurity, income, transportation, employment status, or housing, among other factors. Social risk factors and social drivers of health are terms that are also used to talk about non-medical factors, and these terms are similar but not exactly the same.

⁴**Cultural Competency** is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from your own.

⁵**Cultural Humility** means admitting that one does not know and is willing to learn from patients about their experiences, while looking into his or her own beliefs and cultural identity.

⁶**Health Equality** means everyone receives the same standard of care. Put another way, healthcare equality means giving the same healthcare assistance to all.

There's a difference between equality and equity when talking about healthcare.



The ESRD NCC is working to achieve health equity for all patients affected by kidney disease through patient and professional education, training, and technical assistance. To learn more about the ESRD NCC health equity work, visit www.esrdncc.org/healthequity.

1. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Health Equity. <https://www.cms.gov/pillar/health-equity>
2. Kaiser Family Foundation. Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers>
3. World Health Organization. Social determinants of health. https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1
4. Nebraska Extension. Cultural Competence: An Important Skill Set for the 21st Century. <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1375/build/g1375.htm>
5. National Institute of Health. National Library of Medicine. Cultural humility: Essential foundation for clinical researchers. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3834043>
6. Milken Institute School of Public Health. Equity vs. Equality: What's the Difference? <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality>



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