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Learning Objectives for Measuring Health Disparities

Part I: What are Health Disparities?

By the end of Part I, you should be able to:

1. Know the two overarching goals of Healthy People 2010.
2. Identify the dimensions of health disparity as described in Healthy People 2010.
3. Provide a literal definition of the term “disparity.”
4. Interpret three definitions of health disparity provided in Part I.
5. Distinguish between the terms “health inequality” and “health inequity,” and;
6. Summarize specific cases of health disparity given a graphical representation.

Part II – Issues in Measuring Health Disparities

In this section, we review the main issues you need to consider when measuring health disparities. By the end of Part II, you should be able to:

1. Define relative and absolute disparity.
2. Calculate relative and absolute disparity.
3. Explain why relative and absolute measures can give different estimates of the extent of disparity and its trends over time.
4. Recognize how accounting for the size of population sub-groups can affect measurement of disparity.
5. Define a reference group.
6. Describe how the choice of reference group can affect disparity measurement.
7. Differentiate between groups that can be ranked and those that cannot, and;
8. Describe some common issues in measuring health disparities.

Part III – Measures of Health Disparities

In this part we review the most commonly used measures of health disparity. By the end of Part III, you should be able to:

1. Describe the following measures of health disparities:
 - a. Range measures (Relative Risk, Excess Risk),
 - b. Un-weighted regression-based measures,
 - c. Population-weighted regression-based measures (Slope Index and Relative Index of Inequality),

- d. Index of disparity,
 - e. Between-group variance and Disproportionality measures (Concentration Index, Theil, Mean Log Deviation, Gini), and;
2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the above measures.

Part IV – Analytic Steps in Measuring Health Disparity

In this final section, we will outline a set of analytic steps and recommendations in approaching measurement of health disparities. By the end of Part IV, you should be able to:

1. Describe the sequence of analytic steps in measuring health disparity, and;
2. Classify the four possible scenarios for changes in health disparity and changes in overall population health over time.