

Impact Statement

“It is increasingly recognized that the social determinants of health are the most fundamental drivers of population health and health equity. We have to advocate for, and implement effective strategies to address, the social determinants of health on the personal, clinical, community, and systemic level. To achieve lasting change, we have to understand and confront the multiple intersecting factors at play (The Political Determinants of Health).

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to examine an overall state of health care coverage for African Americans and to shed light on important social factor such as public health education, advocacy, and community interventions that uniquely impact their health outcomes.

Project Site/ Agency

Osborn Neighborhood Alliance (13560 E. McNichols Detroit, MI 48205)

Fellowship Project Description

The aim of this project is to address is to increase the capacity of local agencies to provide care coordination respond to health disparities by educating and connecting residents of Detroit to healthcare resources and providing community training and peer to peer support to fill gaps to improve social determinants of health including access to housing, employment, and decrease and prevents COVID 19 transmission.

Throughout the course of the year, I was able to provide the following virtual workshops, townhalls meetings and additional activities.

- COVID 19 Testing and Vaccination Facts & Myths Workshop

- Promoting Health and Wellness in Your Home and Neighborhood Workshop
- Digital Divide Town Hall – Lack of Access to Internet Access in the 48205 area
- Digital Divide Town Hall – Urgency for Action to Bridge the Digital Divide across Faith-Based Organizations.
- American Heart Association – Understanding Heart Health Workshop
- Building a Stronger Block Club through Health and Wellness Activities Workshop
- Understanding Health Law for Community Advocacy Training
- Assisted in the design and development of the Park Grove health and Wellness Outdoor Park
- Assisted with writing 2 grant proposal for block club health and wellness park

Insight into Racism and Health in the African American Community

African Americans have endured racism within society for hundreds of years. Studies conducted over time have been consistent in proving that racism not only impacts social stratification, but also ability of African Americans to be health both mentally and physically (University of Southern California, “Racism has a toxic effect). This impact is closely related to the causes of African Americans dying prematurely and tend to experience chronic illnesses and mental health challenges at a higher rate than white Americans (Racism, Inequality, and Health Care for African American)

According to a study published in the journal of *Psych neuroendocrinology*, racist experiences bring on an increase in inflammation in African Americans (*Psych neuroendocrinology*, August 2019). This increase in inflammation raises the risk of becoming chronically ill. The researchers of the study assert that, because the body’s response to stressors—such as the adversity of racism results in compromising systems that are critical in fending off disease, exposure to racism over long periods of time caused the health of African Americans to suffer greatly with chronic illness as the body’s defenses were down due to inflammation.³⁹ Chronic illnesses associated with experiencing racism include heart attack, neurodegenerative disease, and metastatic cancer (University of Southern California, “Racism has a toxic effect).

Population Served

While Blacks are more likely than whites to suffer from diseases that may exacerbate the impact of COVID-19, residents in Detroit are also less likely to have health care coverage (Wileden, Lydia. 2020. “Health and Health Insurance in Detroit). People living in Detroit are 38 percent less likely to have health care coverage than others living in the Tri-County area. Though the Affordable Care Act helped to close the racial gap in health insurance coverage, Black people are about 35 percent more likely than white people to be uninsured throughout the country. Black people, compared to white people, are also roughly 25 percent more likely to report not seeing a doctor due to costs. When sick, Black people are about 30 percent more likely than white people to report not having a normal source of health care besides an emergency department (Wileden, Lydia. 2020. “Health and Health Insurance in Detroit).

Additional factors shape racial-health disparities including racial bias in medical treatment. Reports state that Black people relative to white people are more likely to be turned away from COVID-19 testing and treatment, though research from the University of Michigan does not find disparate utilization of COVID-19 testing in Detroit (Ray, Rashawn. 2020. “Racially Equitable Health Care). One stakeholder from this study connected health disparities to access within neighborhoods:

“Our lifespan is a lot lower than many zip codes that are in the suburbs by 15 years. You can take a zip code in Southwest Detroit and also look in Northville. A person in Northville, I think will live to be 82. And for us, it’s about 65. We already come to the table with a number of challenges and stress factors: living in food deserts and not having access to health care, clinics, and health insurance.”

Major Research Findings

- Black residents are significantly more likely to contract and die from COVID-19.
- Black residents are seven times more likely to be very concerned about being evicted and 17 times more likely than White residents to report needing rent assistance.
- Black residents are significantly more likely than Whites to report not having enough money to pay their bills and take out loans relative to Whites. In fact, Blacks are 40%

more likely to report that they run out of money. Over 75% of Detroiters make under \$50,000 a year.

- Black residents in Detroit relative to White residents are significantly more likely to report challenges in securing and maintaining housing, obtaining medication, and getting food, water, and other household supplies.
- Black residents report spending more money on food and gas during the pandemic as well as obtaining food from local food banks. With children engaging mostly in remote learning, parents are concerned with having to provide more food with less money. Black Detroiters report being more likely to have children living in the home.

Evaluation Plan

I developed a pre and post survey that people completed before and after each training, event and/or activity. The open-ended questions asked them to rate the training, event and/or activity. In addition, the questions provided the participants with the opportunity to provide additional thoughts or comments that would be taken to consideration for program performance and improvement.

From my research, survey data collection and interaction with the community residence to provide overview of the factors that contribute to racial gaps in healthcare as well as training opportunities and recommendations to reduce these gaps. Implementing these solutions could improve the lives of all Detroiters and empower families and local communities.

Sustainability

The progress and the connection that I made with my project ensured that the Executive Director that this was something that community needed. As of February 2022, I was hired part time contractually with Osborn Neighborhood Alliance to sustain the project for the next 3 years. Also, I was able to train two community residents to serve as a community advocate for the project.

Reflection

“The hidden forces of goodness are alive in those who serve humanity as a secondary pursuit, those who cannot devote their full life to it. The lot of most people is to have a job, to earn their living, and to assume for themselves a place in society through some kind of nonfulfilling labor.”

They can give little or nothing of their human qualities. But one can save one's life as a human being, along with one's professional existence, if ones seizes every opportunity, however unassuming, to act humanly toward those who need another human being." Out of My Life & Thought, p. 25 - 26

I started this project eager and optimistic about my purpose and my goals to complete the project. But in return I encountered multiple boulders that I did not expect or plan for. However, through the encouragement I received from my site mentor, cohort fellows, Dennis, and community residence which gave me the motivation to keep this project going in spite of it all. Throughout this project this community has embraced and trusted me to provided information they needed to assist them becoming a resourceful and stronger neighborhood. I am also excited that my site mentor has entrusted in me put forth this project as well as to have the opportunity to continue this work contractually.

Lastly, I must say that I truly enjoyed everything about this fellowship and project. I have gained greater understanding of the calling, the purpose and the mission of Albert Schweitzer. I know that part of my life's purpose to be an advocate for social justice and humanitarian. As stated during many of our monthly fellows cohort meetings I started this fellowship with particular goal in mind however I have ended with so much more from the people I served from just listening to the needs and concerns, having a open mind and open heart to receive feedback and suggestions and also this residence in the 48205 area to trust me and accept me to guide them in a direction to understand what it takes to make change in their health and wellness from a reform perspective.