

POPLHLTH 210

Equity and Inequalities in New Zealand Health

Course director

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Course description

Investigates the way in which social determinants lead to particular distributions of health in populations. Draws on a social epidemiological approach to explore ways in which inequalities in health (based on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status) are created, then maintained or eliminated.

Prerequisite: POPLHLTH 102

Restriction: POPLHLTH 201

Key learning outcomes

Working in the health sector requires professionals to have an in-depth understanding of health equity and inequalities. By the end of this course, students will understand and be able to critically discuss:

- what 'equity in health' and 'inequalities in health' mean;
- how inequities and inequalities are created and maintained;
- how inequities and inequalities can be reduced;
- our role, as health care workers, in addressing health inequities.

Finally, students will be able to describe and apply theoretical concepts and models to understand and explain health inequities within national and international contexts.

Structure of the course

The course will consist of approximately 35 contact hours, comprising the following teaching modes:

- One hour lectures, including presentations by guest speakers who are experts in their field
- Weekly tutorials of one hour duration.

This course is intended to provide you, as students, with basic knowledge and skills so that you can effectively operate in a health sector that explicitly seeks to reduce and eliminate inequity in health. This course is founded on the assertion that the responsibility for reducing inequity belongs to everyone. As health workers, we have the additional professional responsibility to ensure that we understand how our work, and the systems within which we work, may contribute to inequities in health. It is therefore essential that we understand how inequities are created and maintained, and how they can be reduced and eliminated.

Over recent decades there has been increasing research and evidence to inform our understanding of health inequities. Alongside this understanding, there has been significant advocacy for intervening to reduce inequity, drawing on social justice, ethics and human rights. Both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally there has been growing health sector and community interest in developing policy and interventions to address health inequities. Thus, there is a greater than ever impetus for health workers to both understand and to acquire the necessary skills in order to address health inequities in their work. For these reasons, this course

is a core component of the Bachelor of Health Sciences programme.
To address the learning outcomes above, the course is organised into a series of modules:

- **Module 1: Laying the foundation**

This first module will introduce you to the course, provide a 'recap' of relevant concepts from first year, explore in more depth the key concepts of health equity, health inequalities, and positionality, and provide theoretical models to aid in your understanding of the subject matter.

- **Module 2: Different explanations for the causes of inequities**

- This module will demonstrate how inequities and inequalities in health are created and maintained through complex interactions between historical, political, social, economic and biological processes. It will highlight a number of different 'lenses' through which inequities can be understood. By drawing on social science, public health and biological models, it will provide an in-depth analysis of these causal pathways.

- **Module 3: Case studies of inequities**

Module 3 will include case study lectures to provide examples of how inequities in health have arisen and are maintained in both local and international contexts. New Zealand based case studies will be used to illustrate some important issues, such as human rights, that underpin power and its distribution in society with regard to age and gender. The international case studies will give a global perspective to the course focusing on health inequities between and within countries, and a discussion of historical and current drivers for these inequities.

- **Module 4: Interventions to reduce inequities**

Module 4 will focus on various interventions, including research, that aim to reduce inequities in health. The role of health services, local communities, advocacy, policy and practice will be examined. Finally, we will examine our own roles in reducing health inequities.

Course assessment

- Reflective writing assignment: 15%
- Essay assignment: 25%
- Final Examination(two hours): 60%

Recommended readings

There is no core textbook, but required and additional readings for each session are listed in the session outlines. All recommended and additional readings are available on Canvas.