The Gardener’s Tale
and the physician’s legitimate role

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Beyond Flexner 2015
Beyond Flexner: Social Mission in Medical Education

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Levels of health intervention
Jones CP et al. *J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.
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Addressing the social determinants of health

Primary prevention

Safety net programs and secondary prevention

Medical care and tertiary prevention

Jones CP et al. *J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.
But how do disparities arise?

- Differences in the quality of care received within the health care system

- Differences in access to health care, including preventive and curative services

- Differences in life opportunities, exposures, and stresses that result in differences in underlying health status


Differences in access to care

Differences in exposures and opportunities

Differences in quality of care
(ambulance slow or goes the wrong way)

Jones CP et al. *J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.
Addressing the social determinants of equity:

Why are there differences in resources along the cliff face?

Why are there differences in who is found at different parts of the cliff?

Jones CP et al. *J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.
3 dimensions of health intervention
3 dimensions of health intervention

*Health services*

Jones CP et al. *J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.
3 dimensions of health intervention

Health services

Addressing social determinants of health
3 dimensions of health intervention

Health services

Addressing social determinants of health

Addressing social determinants of equity

What is racism?

A system

What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value
What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how we look (which is what we call “race”)
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- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities

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What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how we look (which is what we call “race”), that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
- Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources

Levels of Racism

- Institutionalized
- Personally-mediated
- Internalized

Institutionalized racism

- Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society, by “race”

- Examples
  - Housing, education, employment, income
  - Medical facilities
  - Clean environment
  - Information, resources, voice

- Explains the association between social class and “race”

Personally-mediated racism

- Differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others, by “race”
- Differential actions based on those assumptions

- Prejudice and discrimination

- Examples
  - Police brutality
  - Physician disrespect
  - Shopkeeper vigilance
  - Waiter indifference
  - Teacher devaluation

Internalized racism

- Acceptance by the stigmatized “races” of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth

- Examples
  - Self-devaluation
  - White man’s ice is colder
  - Resignation, helplessness, hopelessness

- Accepting limitations to our full humanity

Levels of Racism: A Gardener’s Tale

Who is the gardener?

- Power to decide
- Power to act
- Control of resources

- Dangerous when
  - Allied with one group
  - Not concerned with equity

Japanese Lanterns: Colored perceptions
The colors we think we see are due to the lights by which we look. These colored lights distort and mask our true variability.
What is “race”?

A social classification, not a biological descriptor. The social interpretation of how one looks in a “race”-conscious society.
Dual Reality: A restaurant saga
I looked up and noticed a sign . . . .
Racism structures “Open/Closed” signs in our society.
It is difficult to recognize systems of inequity that privilege us.

Those on the outside are very aware of the two-sided nature of the sign.
Is there really a two-sided sign?

Hard to know, when only see “Open”. A privilege not to HAVE to know. Once DO know, can choose to act.
Life on a Conveyor Belt: Moving to action
Racism is most often passive.
1. Name racism
2. Ask “How is racism operating here?”
3. Organize and strategize to act
The physician’s legitimate role

Health services
The physician’s legitimate role

Health services

Social determinants of health

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Social determinants of equity

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What is [inequity]?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on [fill in the blank]
What is *inequity*? A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on *[fill in the blank]*, that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
- Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources
Many axes of inequity

- “Race”
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Labor roles and social class markers
- Nationality, language, and legal status
- Sexual orientation
- Disability status
- Geography
- Religion

These are risk MARKERS
What is health equity?

- “Health equity” is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people

- Achieving health equity requires
  - Valuing all individuals and populations equally
  - Recognizing and rectifying historical injustices
  - Providing resources according to need

- Health disparities will be eliminated when health equity is achieved

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Telling Stories:

Allegories on “race” and racism

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