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Access: The potential for or actual entry of a population into the health system. Entry is dependent on the wants, resources, and needs that individuals bring to the care-seeking process. The ability to obtain wanted or needed services may be influenced by many factors, including travel distance, waiting time, available financial resources and availability of a regular source of care.

Addiction and Drug Abuse: Drug abuse is described as the excessive use of drugs and is a major public health problem that impacts society on multiple levels. Directly or indirectly, every community is affected by drug abuse and addiction.

Art and Health: Deteriorating physical features of urban environments can negatively influence public health. Dilapidated environments and urban blight tend to promote alienation and can be associated with social disorder, vandalism, crime, drug abuse, traffic violations, and littering, which in turn affects health and well-being. Studies have shown that bringing art into communities drastically improves these public health factors.

Biological Expression of Social Inequality: How people literally embody and biologically express experiences of economic and social inequality, from in utero to death. Examples include biological expressions of poverty, deprivation (material and social), and diverse types of discrimination.

Capacity: The resources, skills, and abilities to perform essential public health functions. (Also see "Infrastructure.")

Case: In epidemiology, a countable instance in the population of a particular disease, health disorder, or condition. A case can also refer to an individual with the particular condition.

Community: A group of people who have common characteristics; communities can be defined by location, race, ethnicity, age occupation, interest in particular problems or outcomes, or other common bonds. Ideally, there should be available assets and resources, as well as collective discussion, decision making, and action.

Determinants of Health: The leading factors that contribute in aggregate to health status in an individual or populations. Determinants include: income, education level, living environment, personal behavior, health care access, genetics and social/cultural issues.

Disaster/Emergency: The possibility of public health emergencies arising in the United States concerns many people in the wake of recent hurricanes, tsunamis, acts of terrorism and the threat of pandemic influenza. Though some people feel it is impossible to be prepared for unexpected events, taking preparedness actions help people deal with disasters of all sorts much more effectively when they do occur.

Early Childhood Development: Children grow, develop, and learn throughout their lives from birth and infancy to adulthood. A child's development can be measured through social, physical, and cognitive developmental milestones. Children who grow up in environments where their developmental needs are not met are at an increased risk for compromised health and safety, and learning and developmental delays. Failure to invest time and resources during children's early years may have long term effects on the foster care, health care, and education systems. Therefore, it is in the public's interest to ensure that children develop in safe, loving, and secure environments.

Education: Complex problems surrounding public health require multi-faceted public health actions based on an ecological approach to problem solving. Such an approach requires a well-educated interdisciplinary core of public health professionals who focus on population health and understand the multiple determinants that affect health. A cadre of professionals who also understand that successful interventions require understanding not only the effects of biology and behavior, but also the social, environmental and economic contexts within which populations exist.

Environmental Health: A branch of public health that is concerned with all aspects of the natural and built environment that may affect human health. Environmental health and protection refers to protection against

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environmental factors that may adversely impact human health or the ecological balances essential to long term human health and environmental quality.

Epidemiology: The study of the distribution and determinants of health-related events in specified human populations, and the application of this study to the control of health problems.

Health Care: The prevention, treatment, and management of illness and the preservation of mental and physical well-being through the services offered by the medical and allied health professions.

Health Disparity: A statistically significant difference in a health indicator between groups that persists over time. (Also see "Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities.")

Health Equity: Distribution of disease, disability and death in such a way as to not create a disproportionate burden on one population; the absence of persistent health differences over time, between racial and ethnic groups.

Health: A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

High Risk Group: A group in the community with an elevated risk of health problems.

Immigration: Although immigration policies are complex, much of the work of public health professionals and organizations is to consider how best to serve the immigrant populations who arrive. There are several public health agencies in the United States responsible for the health of entering populations - helping care for the education, social, and health needs of immigrants. For refugees, in particular, the resettlement process in the United States entails federal agencies working with local providers to ensure health services are provided.

Immunization/Vaccination: Immunization is the process of conferring increased resistance (or decreased susceptibility) to infection. The term "vaccination" is also used to describe this kind of protective measure. Immunization is one of the most cost-effective public health measures available.

Incidence: A measure of the health condition in the population; generally the number of new cases occurring during a specified time period.

Infrastructure: The resources (e.g., personnel, information, monetary, and organizational) used by the public health system to provide the capacity to perform its duties. (Also see "Capacity.")

Intervention: A public health program intended to improve the health of a specific population or the overall population. The focus of a public health intervention is to prevent rather than treat a disease through surveillance of cases and the promotion of healthy behaviors. Interventions can be used to create change in different settings, including: communities, worksites, schools, health care organizations, faith-based organizations or at home. Interventions may be most effective when they include multiple settings.

Market Justice: Health care, like other social, economic and political resources or opportunities in the United States, competes for consumers in the marketplace. Market justice distributes health care based on individual resources and choices, not a collective or community responsibility. Market justice is based on principles of individualism, voluntary behavior and self-interest.

Mental Health: A term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. Cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how "mental health" is defined.

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Nursing: Profession concerned with the provision of services essential to the maintenance and restoration of health by attending the needs of sick persons.

Nutrition: A science that examines the relationship between diet and health. Dietitians are health professionals who specialize in this area of study, and are trained to provide safe, evidence-based dietary advice and interventions.

Obesity: Since the mid-seventies, the prevalence of overweight adults and children has increased sharply. These increasing rates raise concern because of their implications for Americans' health. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions, and is considered one of the top public health issues today.

Oral Health: Improvements in the oral health of the population in the United States have been much heralded in recent years. However, these gains have eluded many of the most vulnerable people - those for whom public health personnel often have special concern - in the United States and other countries. For such individuals, living with oral pain and disfigurement means a lack of health that interferes with the opportunity to learn and obtain meaningful employment.

Physical Activity: Healthy diets and regular, adequate physical activity are major factors in the promotion and maintenance of good health throughout the entire life course. Unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are two of the main risk factors for raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose, abnormal blood lipids, obesity, and for the major chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

Population Health: An approach to health that aims to improve the health of the entire population and to reduce health inequities among population groups.

Prevalence: A measure of the burden of a health condition in a population; generally the number or proportion of cases of the health condition at a specified time point or period. Prevalence is affected by both the incidence and the duration of the health condition in a population.

Prevention: Anticipatory action taken to prevent the occurrence of an adverse health event or to minimize its effects after it has occurred. Prevention is fundamental to the field of public health and differentiates it from the field of medicine, which largely focuses on treatment.

Preventive Care: A set of measures taken in advance of symptoms to prevent illness or injury. This type of care is best exemplified by routine physical examinations and immunizations. The emphasis is on preventing illnesses before they occur.

Public Health Mission: To fulfill society's interest in assuring conditions in which people can make choices to be healthy in their communities. Public health carries out its mission through organized, interdisciplinary efforts that help prevent and treat the physical, mental and environmental health concerns of communities and populations.

Public Hygiene: Includes public behaviors individuals can take to improve their personal health and wellness. Topics include public transportation, food preparation and public washroom use. These are steps individuals can take themselves. Examples would include avoiding crowded subways during the flu season, using gloves when touching handrails and opening doors in public malls, as well as eating at clean restaurants.

Race/Ethnicity: Race and ethnicity are social, not biological constructs, referring to social groups often sharing cultural heritage and ancestry. Race and ethnicity are not valid biological or genetic categories.

Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Persistent differences in health indicators by race and ethnicity across multiple categories (chronic disease, communicable disease, intentional and unintentional injuries and maternal and child health indicators). (Also see "Health Disparity.")

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Rate: A mathematical expression for the relation between the numerator (number of deaths, diseases, disabilities, services, etc.) and denominator (population at risk), together with specifications of time. Rates make possible a comparison of the number of health conditions between populations and at different times.

Root Causes (Also referred to as “Fundamental Causes” or “Upstream Causes”): Root causes are primary causes of health problems that underlie the more obvious causes. Social problems are often root causes that result in health inequalities through complex pathways. For example, racism is a root cause because it results in income inequality, lack of power, residential and occupational segregation, and stress in marginalized groups. These things in turn cause things like inadequate health care, working in dangerous environments, living in cramped conditions where infections spread easily, smoking, and the inability to afford nutritious food. These things, in turn, are related to a host of health problems like injury, infectious and chronic disease, and mental illness. While addressing root causes will not eliminate disease and death, it will reduce health disparities between populations.

Social Justice/Equity: Social justice is the equitable distribution of social, economic and political resources, opportunities, and responsibilities and their consequences. The Social Justice Framework claims there is marginalization based on race, class, gender, and other social classifications that underlie the inequitable distribution of social justice. This unequal distribution of resources and opportunities is manifested through inequitable access and exposure to social determinants of health.

Statistical Significance: When quantitative differences found between populations are labeled as statistically significant, it means the differences are considered highly likely to be real and are not due to mere coincidence (random error). For example, if the diabetes rate for Hispanics is higher than the rate for other racial/ethnic groups and those differences are statistically significant, it means the rates probably reflect true disparities between groups.

Systems Change: The process of improving the capacity of the public health system to work with many sectors to improve the health status of all people in a community.