

Health Equity QUERI Center

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Population health evaluation informing evidence-based equity enhancement

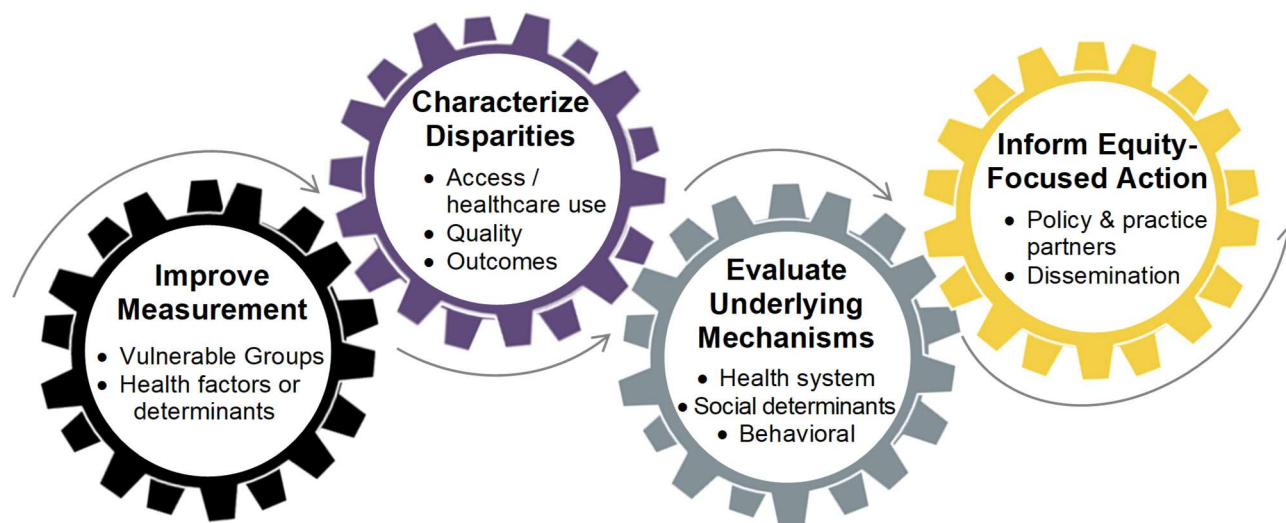
The Office of Health Equity (OHE)/QUERI National Partnered Evaluation Initiative is using a population health approach to examine health, health care quality, experiences, and outcomes of vulnerable Veteran populations across the Veterans Health Administration. This evaluation is improving measurement of vulnerable groups and of health factors or determinants, assessing disparities in health and health care outcomes, and evaluating mechanisms underlying VHA disparities, to inform interventions to achieve health equity. The Health Equity QUERI center has filled evidence gaps about disparities in understudied vulnerable Veteran populations and informed development of equity-focused actions.

Multi-Faceted Approach to Measuring Extent and Mechanisms of Disparities to Inform Action

Health disparities have persisted over time in the U.S. for a wide range of conditions affecting vulnerable populations. In the VA health system, where financial barriers to receiving care are minimized, disparities are diminished but are still present for many important health outcomes.

The Health Equity QUERI center partners with the VHA Office of Health Equity, Health Equity Coalition, COVID-19 Equity Workgroups, and affiliated operations partners, to support data, research, evaluation, awareness, and health outcome goals for implementing the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

Health Equity QUERI Center Activities



VHA Office of
Health Equity / QUERI
National Partnered
Evaluation Initiative

Multi-level Data Analysis



Evaluate the quality of the measures used to identify vulnerable Veteran populations



Identify strategies to enhance data quality



Conduct ongoing evaluation of Veterans' health and healthcare disparities



Mentor disparities researchers and fellows



Disseminate findings about VA health and health care equity

Vulnerable Veteran population characteristics measured include those historically linked to discrimination or exclusion:

- Sex
- Race/ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Geographic location
- Socio-economic status
- Gender identity
- Mental Health & Disability

Key Impacts and Future Directions

Improve Measurement: Leading VA evaluation of the quality of race/ethnicity data in VA electronic health records, in response to **U.S. GAO Report**, “Opportunities Exist for VA to Better Identify and Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities” (GAO-20-083, 12/2019)

Characterize Disparities: Developed VA’s first ever National Veterans Health Equity Report; in collaboration with OHE, assessing disparities in effects of **COVID-19 in racial/ethnic minorities** and other vulnerable groups within VA

Evaluate Underlying Mechanisms: Advancing understanding of relationships among residential characteristics, social determinants of health, and **VA racial/ethnic mortality disparities**

Inform Equity-Focused Action: Increasing awareness of VA health and healthcare equity issues – **Congressional briefings and testimony** include:

- U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Health (2/2020 oversight hearing, “Achieving Health Equity for America’s Minority Veterans”)
- U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee Women Veterans Task Force (10/2019 research round table)
- Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust (9/2019 Forum on African American women Veterans)

For more information, check out:
<https://www.queri.research.va.gov>

If you would like to learn more or partner with us, please contact our Program Analyst, Mark Canning, at Mark.Canning@va.gov.

Principal Investigator:
Donna L. Washington, MD, MPH, FACP
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System