

UNNATURAL CAUSES

is inequality making us sick?

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*** Series Objectives**

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[Transcripts](#)

[Updates](#)

[Credits](#)

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* Series Objectives

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Changing Our Public Discourse on Health

The **UNNATURAL CAUSES** series and accompanying impact campaign aim to enlarge our public discourse about health through the following objectives:

- (1) Increase public awareness of our alarming socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequities in health and their human and financial costs;
- (2) Promote understanding of the various ways in which class, racism and disempowerment can get under the skin and influence health outcomes;
- (3) Illustrate how well-being is not just a matter of making good choices and having access to quality care; our outcomes are inextricably linked - for better and worse - to the social conditions that surround and shape our lives;
- (4) Demonstrate that health inequities affect all of us. On average, the bottom 80% of us have worse health than the rich and powerful. We all bear the financial burden for disease and disability: increased medical costs, lost economic activity, lowered business productivity;



- (5) Move health discussions "upstream" - beyond the individual-focused "repair shop" model of disease and illness to a preventive approach that looks to change the underlying conditions that shape whole group outcomes;

- (6) Link health discussions to social and economic policies - e.g., housing, racism, education, jobs and wages, community development, social supports and tax policy. Evaluate social and economic policies by their health impact, and press for more health-promoting measures;

- (7) Communicate hopeful solutions that draw public and policy maker attention to innovative and community-based initiatives for health equity.

"There is an Axis of Evil," David Williams says, "an Axis of Evil of inequality, of racism, of poverty, of economic deprivation that is adversely affecting the health of the American people."

As a nation, we can address the racial and economic inequalities that increase our risk of disease now, or we can pay to repair our bodies later.

DID YOU KNOW: Health is more than health care.

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NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

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