Te Wero
Challenging Inequalities in Health

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Louise Signal
Wellington School of Medicine & Health Sciences
Inequalities in health are:

- unfair
- unjust
- avoidable
- unnecessary
What causes inequalities between groups?

The unequal distribution of the determinants of health
Fundamental drivers of inequalities in health

- Socioeconomic circumstances
- Social exclusion "the process by which individuals are denied the opportunities to participate in the activities normally expected of members of that society"
  - For example: sexism, racism, class.
Why should health promoters be concerned with inequalities?

- Inequalities can be reduced
- International recognition that equity a key health goal
- Government priority
- Health promotion recognises its importance
- Inequalities can be reduced by health promotion action
- There is much to gain
Equity a central concern in health promotion

- Ottawa Charter – advocate for health and equity in all sectors
- Jakarta Declaration goal is to increase health expectancy, and to narrow the gap in health expectancy between countries and groups
- Bangkok Charter recognises increasing inequalities within and between countries
What do we have to gain?

- a fairer society, where everyone has the opportunity for good health
- an inclusive society, where everyone has a sense of belonging and feels that their contribution is valued
- better health and wellbeing for the population as a whole, not just for those groups who are currently experiencing relatively poor health
- a stronger economy
BUT:
Limited evidence of success

“Unfortunately participants in health promotion activities are often those who need them least” (Glasgow, 1999)
Cause for optimism about our capacity

- Recognise its importance
- We can build it into needs assessment
- Range of strategies for intervention
- Evaluate our efforts
What can health promoters do to tackle inequalities?

Health promotion must have two goals

- Improving health
- Tackling inequalities in health
Practice Treaty-based health promotion

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi founding document of New Zealand
- Te Tiriti concerned with health
- Health promotion ethics include:
  - recognising Māori as tangata whenua and acknowledging te Tiriti o Waitangi
  - commitment to equal health status for Māori
Build an equity lens into our work

- Assess needs of those least advantaged
- Intervene with those least advantaged
- Use strategies to intervene at all levels
- Evaluate interventions for progress in tackling inequalities
- Amend programmes accordingly
End victim blaming

The Titanic, a tale of health inequalities

• 2,220 passengers - 1500 deaths
• age, gender and social class inequalities

• policy responses -
  critique rationing of services
  eliminating barriers to access
  system response & responsibility

Papaarangi Reid
Watch our gaze

What we look at is
What we see
This frames how we intervene
Take a comprehensive approach to tackling inequalities

- Build Healthy Public Policy
- Create supportive environments
- Strengthen community action
- Develop personal skills
- Reorient health services
Be leaders for equity

- Engage in the political and policy-making processes in health and other sectors

- Become politicians and managers across all sectors
Focus on Institutional Change for Equity

Institutions matter - they structure the development and implementation of policy, programmes and services. Examine our own and other institutions for:

- Ideas - define the “conventional wisdom”
- Organisational structures - frame what is possible
- Processes and rules - dictate how we work
Use tools to assist us

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- TUHA-NZ
- NZ Dep
- Decile rankings in schools
- Intervention framework
- HEAT tool
- HIA with equity focus
- Planning and evaluation templates
Support each other

- Training
- Mentoring
- Team work
- Talk about the challenges
- Work strategically
My challenge to you

Take a moment to identify one thing that you will commit to doing to tackle inequalities in health when you get back to work tomorrow
Conclusion

Health promotion has a significant contribution to make to tackling inequalities in health by:

- Adopting two goals – health & equity
- Treaty-based practice
- Using an equity lens in all work
- Watching our gaze
- Taking comprehensive action
- Engaging in political and policy-making processes
- Changing institutions
- Using the tools available & support each other
- Remember the Titanic - end victim blaming - challenge the system