

## ***Healthcare Disparities Within Disadvantaged Populations***

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The field of medicine is an ever-evolving field due to constant advances in science, mathematics, and engineering leading to the development of technological abilities once rendered impossible. These fascinating discoveries have given life a new meaning, revolutionizing healthcare and giving people the opportunity to be healthy, one that is often taken for granted. However, despite the existence and capabilities of these incredible forms of technology, a small fraction of the world is granted access due to limitations on funding and resources. This bears the question: why is such a small percentage of the world given access to life-saving technology that can change peoples' lives? Why is the factor that decides the value of a person's life adequate funding, or lack thereof? This notion has impacted hundreds of minority populations and has subsequently caused the erasure of certain cultures and traditions due to the absence of universal healthcare.

One of the main reasons as to why data exists proving the healthcare disparities among minority populations is because these populations are not taught about or given resources to promote health across an entire environment, that being the health of the plants, animals, and ecosystem. These three environmental factors are interchangeable in the world of healthcare, and if even one of them is not sufficiently benefiting the overall population, the entire network will fail therefore creating an unhealthy environment. For example, an area could contain perfectly healthy humans and animals but could also be producing emissions contributing to air pollution, making for insufficient healthcare because air pollution is responsible for a massive 7 million human deaths each year. The same is true for animals as meat plays a pivotal role in the diets and nutrition of humans, and if animals are not able to receive adequate nutrition themselves often resulting from poor environmental conditions, humans will experience vitamin deficiencies and poor caloric intakes. If animals are not receiving nutrition due to inadequate farming and growing conditions, it is impossible for humans to obtain acceptable non-meat products to consume for nutrition. It is often overlooked how important these subgroups are to population growth and health because the impacts do not typically show immediately, but the health of animals, humans, and the ecosystem are synonymous with one another and healthcare disparities resulting from indoctrinated concepts such as racism and xenophobia can only be addressed once environmental harmony in all areas has been achieved.

Gaining momentum in the early 2000s, the World Health Organization launched an initiative that provides community assistance and education to help disadvantaged areas of the world tackle this demanding issue of environmental harmony. The initiative is entitled "One Health" to exemplify the interconnectedness of human, animal, and ecosystem health and how

population success cannot be achieved without the synonymous existence of all three factors. One Health calls upon medical and environmental science professionals of all disciplines and areas of the world to eliminate this long-standing barrier to adequate healthcare, utilizing the resources provided by epidemiologists, public health professionals, veterinarians, and doctors to effectively address all facets of this issue. One Health recognizes the detrimental effects that zoonotic and vector-borne diseases can have on ecosystem life as these infections move relatively undetected throughout populations and are typically not distinguished until populations have been severely harmed. Professionals have traveled to hundreds of underfunded communities to educate on proper agricultural and environmental maintenance techniques, and have taught these populations how to properly detect and report public health threats such as food contamination, presence of toxic byproducts in the environment, and pollution of any kind.

Not only does the One Health initiative greatly benefit disadvantaged populations in terms of better healthcare, it also incorporates a significant amount of funding into the community as workers all across the globe do not have to accommodate for issues such as air pollution or deforestation. The latter example has been used to prove the potential involvement of One Health in terms of the economy, as up to 4.3 billion USD could be reincorporated into global funds because carbon dioxide emissions would be significantly reduced as well as the amount of workers needed to destroy the landscape. As mentioned previously, air pollution contributes to an annual 7 billion human deaths which subsequently leads to losses upwards of 3 trillion USD because not only is this a significant productivity loss, air pollution also has immense effects on agriculture resulting in significant funding loss. However, because One Health is educating populations all across the globe about the importance of reducing pollution of all kinds, this number is projected to lessen and will continue to do so as this initiative receives more attention and support.

These health impacts have been some of the most challenging issues to tackle in human history due to the heavily industrialized society present today and the undeniable equity differences across the world in funding, education, and resources. The One Health initiative created by the World Health Organization is certainly not the final solution to this ongoing problem, but with the support and help from others has the potential to achieve more tangible accomplishments. The World Health Organization recently celebrated the eighth anniversary of “One Health Day” on November 3rd, 2023 which serves as a push to reach more professionals of different disciplines and locations to further this initiative, as well as being a day to recognize some of the organization’s achievements, such as an improved policy for recognizing public health threats as well as new prevention tactics for zoonotic and vector-borne diseases. The impacts of healthcare disparities are undeniable in today’s world, but with the assistance of prominent organizations such as the World Health Organization, humans will begin to overcome this harmful product of industrialization to increase intellectual productivity and the production of goods everywhere.

**References:**

World Health Organization: WHO. "WHO Urges Investing in 'One Health' Actions for Better Health of the People and the Planet." *World Health Organization*, 3 Nov. 2023, [www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2023-who-urges-investing-in--one-health--actions-for-better-health-of-the-people-and-the-planet](https://www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2023-who-urges-investing-in--one-health--actions-for-better-health-of-the-people-and-the-planet). Accessed 6 Jan. 2024.