



The Breakthrough to Nursing[®] column presents ideas and perspectives about the importance of cultural diversity in nursing.

By Kenya Haney, Director of Breakthrough to Nursing[®]

Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health: A Nursing Student's Perspective



The Third National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health was hosted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Minority Health from Feb 25-27. Healthy People 2010 defines health disparities as health “differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

What I found most impressive was the outline for change formed by the National Partnership for Action

(NPA). The NPA has formulated an action plan that includes Awareness, Leadership, Health and Health System Experience, Cultural and Linguistic Competency, and Research and Evaluation. Below I address these actions and suggest actions we can take as nursing students to help motivate, encourage and demand change in the very communities that we live.

1. Awareness – As nursing students one of our major hurdles with health disparities lies with awareness. I encourage nursing students to reach further into their own communities and become aware of the needs and ethnic and racial disparities that exist.

2. Leadership – Leadership is vital for stamping out racial and ethnic disparities. Step up to the plate and be the leaders in your communities. Develop Breakthrough to Nursing[®] projects that focus on awareness which are patient-centered. Also, constantly encourage leadership from new students so we can ensure the movement continues.

For more information on
Healthy People 2020
see page 23

Photo above: Kenya Haney and Dr. Garth Graham, MPH, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health.

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3. Health and Health System Experience – Enjoy your clinical rotations and ensure your patients are receiving the best care we can deliver. As nursing students and future nurses we are on the front line of healthcare. Let's stamp out racial and ethnic disparities one patient at a time.

4. Cultural and Linguistic Competency – Become staunch patient advocates during your clinical and nursing school experiences. If you see your patients are in need of cultural or linguistic services advocate for them so they will receive the needed and deserved services.

5. Research and Evaluation – Be proactive and engage in research that evaluates racial and ethnic disparities. If we are active participants in research and evaluation projects we can help eradicate ethnic and racial disparities.

As nursing students we are an integral part of our healthcare delivery system and the future of healthcare. NSNA members can be the catalyst for change. With our collaborative voices we can, and most certainly should, fight to work on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in our society. ©



reference

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). Healthy People 2010. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Healthy People 2020 Yes We Can!

One important way that nurse leaders can advocate for equity in health for all Americans is by engaging in the development of Healthy People 2020. NSNA members, state consultants, advisors, and faculty are invited to give your comments and suggestions as part of the collaborative process of building Healthy People 2020. In 2008, feedback was collected on various conceptual aspects and proposals for specific elements, including vision, mission, overarching goals, organizing framework, users, and implementation. General comments were also collected and used to inform the Healthy People 2020 process.

Healthy People 2020 will be launched in two phases. The organizing framework, including the vision, mission and overarching goals, will be released in 2009. The specific objectives, accompanied by strategies for achieving them, will be launched in 2010.

MARCH 2009 UPDATE: PRELIMINARY OBJECTIVE DEVELOPMENT COMMENT PERIOD. In preparation for the process of creating draft objectives for Healthy People 2020, we are seeking preliminary comments on existing Healthy People 2010 objectives. Comments received by April 24 will be considered as we create the draft objectives for Healthy People 2020. This is a preliminary input period that will help inform the development of a set of draft Healthy People 2020 objectives. A more extensive public comment period on the draft Healthy People 2020 objectives will be conducted through the website (www.healthypeople.gov/hp2020) at a future date.

The public comment website will be open throughout the Healthy People 2020 development process, with intermittent submission deadlines that will allow us to compile and analyze comments received by specific points in the process. As development moves forward, additional materials will be posted for comment.

You can stay involved by sending an e-mail message to listserv@list.nih.gov with the message text: "subscribe HEALTHYPEOPLE." You may also submit or view comments at www.healthypeople.gov/hp2020/Comments/SubjectFocus.aspx.