

BLOG

PEARLS+: Connecting Societal Forces, Social Determinants, and Health Outcomes

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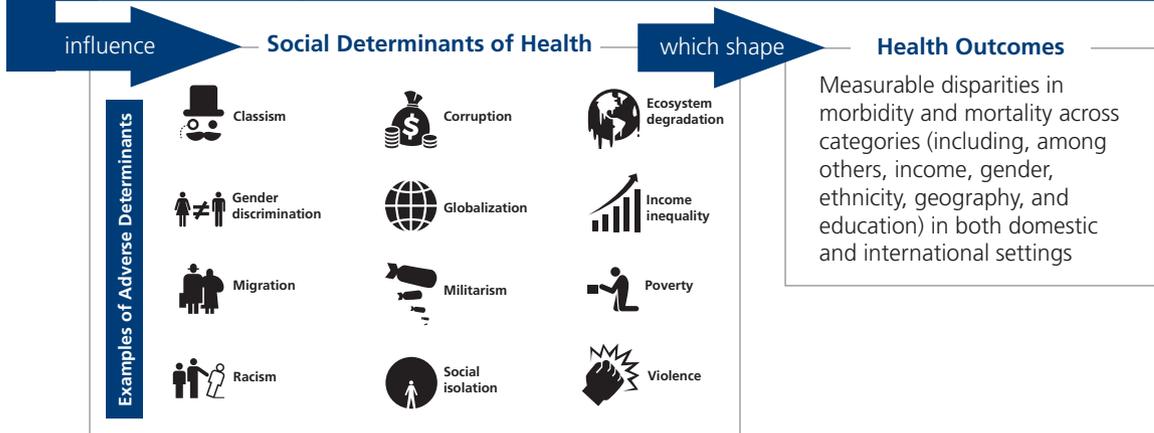
The Basics: Defining “Societal Forces,” “Social Determinants,” and “Health Outcomes”

- *Societal forces* are the set of influences and systems that shape the conditions of daily life.¹
- *Social determinants of health* are the “conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.”¹
- *Health outcomes* are measures of morbidity and mortality.

The PEARLS+ Acronym

- PEARLS+ organizes several key societal forces that influence social determinants and, in turn, shape health outcomes.
- Example questions explore the connections among these societal forces, social determinants, and health outcomes.

Key societal forces	P	Politics	How do political priorities and systems of power affect social patterns that either enhance quality of life or marginalize segments of the population?
	E	Economics	What levels of domestic and international inequity exist, and how do economic policies address or further contribute to these inequities?
	E	Environment	Do policies exist to protect against environmental illness (including, for example, water-, air-, and vector-borne diseases, plus those caused by exposure to hazardous materials or conditions), and, if so, how are they enforced?
		Ethics	What ethical tenets guide medical and public health practice, and how does their use advance or hinder equity across social boundaries?
	A	Arms	How much money is allocated to military expenditures relative to funds directed to social services, and what are the implications of that distribution?
	R	Religion	What is the influence of religion on social attitudes, and how do religious convictions guide medical practices, health beliefs, and individual behaviors?
	L	Life circumstances	How do feelings such as fear, depression, anxiety, and oppression influence individual and collective behaviors, and how have they been shaped by both local and global histories?
	S	Social roles	What are the common rules of interpersonal interaction, and how do variations in gender, ethnicity, geography, social status, and education affect them?
		Social structures	What social institutions inhibit or enhance equity, and how?
	+	+ Other forces	Given differences in culture and context, what other forces, including interpersonal interactions, have a role in promoting and sustaining adverse social determinants of health?



Disparities in health outcomes are systemic and socially produced.² Appreciating the social determinants of health and the societal forces that influence them is crucial to the work of improving health outcomes of people worldwide.^{3,4} PEARLS+ can help health care practitioners and educators organize, investigate, and describe societal forces and their effects on social determinants of health and health outcomes.

References:

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