

POPULATION HEALTH

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Abstract

Population health is defined because the health outcomes of a gaggle of people, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group. These groups are often geographic populations like nations or communities, but also can be other groups like employees, ethnic groups, disabled persons, prisoners, or the other defined group.

The health outcomes of such groups are of relevance to policy makers in both the general public and personal sectors.

Note that population health isn't just the general health of a population but also includes the distribution of health. Overall health might be quite high if the bulk of the population is comparatively healthy—even though a minority of the population is far less healthy. Ideally such differences would be eliminated or a minimum of substantially reduced.

The right hand side of the figure indicates that there are many health determinants or factors, like medical aid systems, individual behavior, genetics, the social environment, and therefore the physical environment. Each of those determinants features a biological impact on individual and population health outcomes. Population health, as defined above, has been critiqued as being so broad on include everything—and therefore not very useful in guiding specific research or policy. The reality is, nobody within the public or private sectors currently has responsibility for overall health improvement. Policy managers, for instance, tend to possess responsibility for one sector while advocacy groups likewise specialize in one disease or factor.

The inherent value of a population health perspective is that it facilitates integration of data across the various factors that influence health and health outcomes. For population health research, specific investigations into one factor, outcome measure, or policy intervention are relevant, and should even be critical in some cases but they ought to be recognized as only a neighborhood and not the entire.

Difference between population health and public health

The distinction between public health and population health deserves attention since it's been sometimes both confusing and even divisive. Traditionally, public health has been understood by many to be the critical functions of state and native public health departments like preventing epidemics, containing environmental hazards, and inspiring healthy behaviors.

The broader current definition of the general public health system offered by the Institute of Medicine reaches beyond this narrow governmental view. Its report, *The Long Term of the Public's Health within the 21st Century*, involves significant movement in "building a replacement generation of intersecting partnerships that draw on the perspectives and

Resources of diverse communities and actively engage them in health action."

However, much of U.S. governmental public health activity doesn't have such a broad mandate even in its "assurance" functions, since major population health determinants like health care, education, and income remain outside public health authority and responsibility. Similarly, current resources provide inadequate support for traditional and emerging public health functions. Yet for those that define public health because the "health of the general public" there's little difference from the population health framework of this blog.