The Office of Health Equity (OHE)/QUERI National Partnered Evaluation Initiative is using a population health approach to examine health, healthcare quality, experiences, and outcomes of vulnerable Veteran populations across the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This evaluation is improving measurement of vulnerable groups and of health factors or determinants, assessing disparities in health and healthcare outcomes, and evaluating mechanisms underlying VHA disparities, to inform interventions to achieve health equity. Health Equity/QUERI has filled evidence gaps about disparities in understudied vulnerable Veteran populations, and informed development of equity-focused actions.

Health disparities have persisted over time in the U.S. for a wide range of conditions affecting vulnerable populations. In the VA healthcare system, where financial barriers to receiving care are minimized, disparities are diminished, but are still present for many important health outcomes.

**Key Operations Partner:** Health Equity/QUERI partners with **VHA Office of Health Equity,** Health Equity Coalition, COVID-19 Equity Workgroups, and affiliated operations partners, to support data, research, evaluation, awareness, and health outcome goals for implementing the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

**Health Equity/QUERI Activities:**

- **Characterize Disparities**
  - Access / healthcare use
  - Quality
  - Outcomes

- **Evaluate Underlying Mechanisms**
  - Health system
  - Social determinants
  - Behavioral

- **Inform Equity-Focused Action**
  - Policy & practice partners
  - Dissemination

- **Improve Measurement**
  - Vulnerable Groups
  - Health factors or determinants
Multi-level Data Analysis

- Evaluate the quality of the measures used to identify vulnerable Veteran populations
- Identify strategies to enhance data quality
- Conduct ongoing evaluation of Veterans’ health and healthcare disparities
- Mentor disparities researchers and fellows
- Disseminate findings about VA health and health care equity

Vulnerable Veteran population characteristics measured include those historically linked to discrimination or exclusion

- Race/ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Gender identity
- Geographic location
- Mental Health & Disability

Key Impacts and Future Directions


**Characterize Disparities:** Developed VA’s first ever National Veterans Health Equity Report; in collaboration with OHE, assessing disparities in effects of **COVID-19 in racial/ethnic minorities** and other vulnerable groups within VA.

**Evaluate Underlying Mechanisms:** Advancing understanding of relationships among residential characteristics, social determinants of health, and VA **racial/ethnic mortality disparities**.

**Inform Equity-Focused Action:** Increasing awareness of VA health and healthcare equity issues – **Congressional briefings and testimony** include:

- U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Health (2/2020 oversight hearing, “Achieving Health Equity for America’s Minority Veterans”)
- U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee Women Veterans Task Force (10/2019 research round table)
- Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust (9/2019 Forum on African American women Veterans).

For more information, check out: [link](https://www.queri.research.va.gov/national_partnered_evaluations/equity.cfm)

If you would like to learn more or partner with us, please contact our Program Analyst, Mark Canning, at Mark.Canning@va.gov.

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