Racism Has Always Been a Public Health Crisis: Equity and Health in the Built Environment

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How do buildings impact human health?
Learning Objectives

• **Describe** the importance of mechanical ventilation in reducing indoor air pollutants as well as simple steps that residents in low-to-moderate resource settings can do to mitigate exposure.

• **Access** the resources that can help identify and specify building materials which promote occupant health, as well as equity and environmental justice in the built environment and throughout the supply chain.

• **Address** cultural diversity considerations in the building planning and design process and take action to make building design policies and procedures more culturally inclusive.

• **Challenge** common understandings of “access” and “recreation,” leading to a reframing of the importance of providing a safe and accessible pathway to greenspace.
What determines health outcomes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5%</td>
<td>Genetics/biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈20%</td>
<td>Lifestyle/behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈20%</td>
<td>Medical care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈55%</td>
<td>Physical &amp; social environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s not your genetic code…

it’s your zip code!

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/faq.html
Scary Statistics

90% Time we spend indoors

75% Deaths caused by chronic disease, up from 13% in 1800

85% Of the 82,000 chemicals in use lacking available health data

Today’s kids are the first generation expected to have shorter life expectancy than their parents

Source: Fitwel Ambassadors Training Video 2017
Racism is a Public Health Crisis

• “Racism and discrimination are leading barriers to health equity and have perpetuated a society where Black people are more likely to face chronic diseases, die from violence, and suffer from prolonged depression.”

• In New York City, Black residents are more than twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as Whites.

• New study released 9/15: more than 75% of children dying from COVID-19 are Black, Hispanic and American Indian.
For Health, place matters.

• And should be a right.

Healthy housing problems
• Cockroaches
• Mice and rats
• Cracks and holes in walls
• Water leaks
• Broken plaster, peeling paint
• Heat breakdown
• Supplemental heat
• No air conditioning
• Toilet breakdowns
• ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE
Public Health Crisis

- Breast cancer increasing
- Testicular cancer increasing
- Asthma increasing
- Fertility rates declining
- Sperm count declining
- Learning disabilities increasing
- Obesity increasing
- PANDEMICS

COVID-19
Reasons for Hope:
We know more now than we have ever known!
Marginalized Communities in NYC

Percent Non-White
- 0 - 20
- 21 - 40
- 41 - 60
- 61 - 80
- 81 - 100
Reach Out!

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