



Equity from the Start

Implications for the Early Years

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Musqueam traditional territory



‘We all speak from somewhere...





1. What does *'healthy equity'* for infants and young children mean to you?
1. *Why* do you think health equity in early childhood is important?

health
inequities

health
disparities



Infant Mortality Rate [IMR]

- Recognized worldwide as a fundamental indicator of the health and human development of a country.
- *“It is a measure of the compassion of a society for its most vulnerable and the commitment of a government to all of its citizens”*
- Differences in IMR between and within countries are not due to biological determinants but of social conditions and access to societal resources
- In BC the average IMR is 4 infant deaths/1,000 live births.
- For First Nations infants the IMR is estimated at 8* deaths/1,000 live births.
- For Inuit infants the IMR is estimated at 16**/1,000 live births.

(UNICEF Canadian Supplement to the State of the World's Children 2009; Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2009).

'Health equity' as equitable access to health care

- Distributive (economic) model of health equity - health care is a commodity that can be distributed fairly in society in order to achieve population health
- Underpinned by notion that all children have fair and equal access to health care
- Maintains the power of the government and individuals as passive recipient of state resources
- Underlying social determinants and the structural conditions that are at the root of health inequities are rendered invisible and unaddressed



‘Health equity’ as equitable access to health outcomes

- Focus is primarily on all children having equitable opportunity to the same health outcomes*
- Reinforces the right for *all* children to achieve their highest potential in health outcomes
- Draws attention to how children’s health is influenced by social determinants
- Aligned with a children’s human rights perspective



A Health Equity Perspective

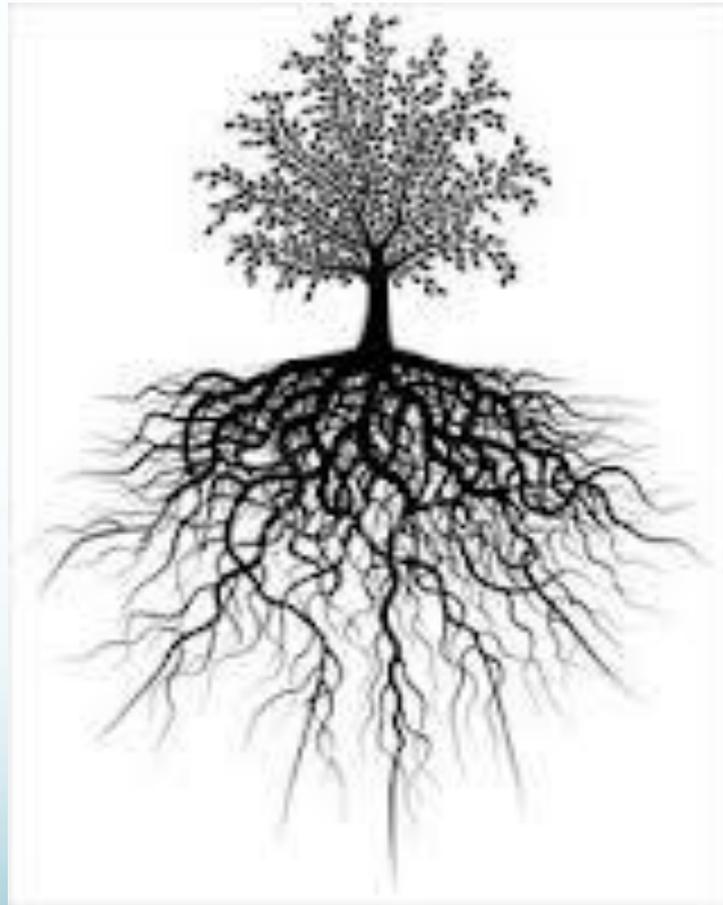
- Health equity has been defined by the World Health Organization as the absence of **systematic** and **remediable** differences in one or more characteristics of health across socially, economically or demographically defined populations or population groups.
- Health equities are closely connected to **the distribution of power** and **wealth** within a society, and the social conditions in which people grow and live.
- Michael Marmot, (former Chair of WHO Commission on SDH) has called for 'equity for every child from the start' as **a fundamental action on the social determinants of health** in order to address health inequities within and between countries.
- Moves beyond an illness/biomedical model of health by drawing attention to how children's health is socially determined.
- Situates health within a broader discourse of **social justice** – aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Health Inequities in Aboriginal infants and young children

- Infant mortality rate (IMR) is an internationally recognized indicator of a country's infant health status
- IMRs are associated with multiple factors, including a mother's SES
- In BC the average IMR is 4 infant deaths/1,000 live births.
- For Aboriginal infants on reserve, the rate is 5-6 deaths/1,000 live births.
- For Aboriginal infants living off reserve, the rate is 10 deaths/1,000 live births

(Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2009).

‘the causes of the causes’



Why is it important to address health inequities in early childhood ?

Bioscientific perspective

Human capital perspective

Human rights perspective

Social justice

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24).
- The right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27).
- That a child belonging to a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture (Article 30)
- What does this mean for BC?
 - **All** young people in BC have access to the resources and opportunities that are essential to living at their optimal level of health.
 - *All* families have access to sufficient resources to provide their children with the essentials of a healthy life.
 - Children and youth are connected to their communities and have meaningful relationships with the people in their lives

('Growing up in BC', 2010)



- *The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.*

(UNICEF, Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007)



So...

what are the implications for programs serving infants and young children?



Thank you!

Alison

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