



NIMHD Is in the Process of Creating a Scientific Vision for the Next Decade

Why Create a Scientific Vision for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research?

NIMHD was established in 2010 to coordinate, conduct, and support research that improves minority health and eliminates health disparities. There have been major advances in various disciplines that inform the science of adversity and health, relevant to minority health and health disparities research. The disciplines include advances in:

- **Developmental biology**, which looks at how we develop from an embryo and later repair and renew our tissues and origins of adult health and disease;
- **Environmental epigenetics**, which focuses on how the environment can affect which genes we express;
- **Neuroscience**, which looks at how our brain and overall nervous system works, including the effects of our social environment on brain development; and
- **Integrated social and behavioral science** advances in etiology and mechanisms of health disparities.

Health disparities are a substantial burden to society in terms of healthcare costs, lost productivity, and general societal well-being. Now is the right time to take stock of the state of the science and stimulate new strategies for closing the gaps in health status among minorities and other underserved populations. NIMHD is in the process of creating a scientific vision that will inform a transformational research agenda for the next decade.

The Scientific Vision Process

NIMHD is soliciting input from diverse voices, including researchers, medical professionals, community-based health groups, and other stakeholders, to create a framework for how best to achieve the goal of improving minority health and reducing health disparities. The process is divided into two phases.

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In Phase 1, NIMHD is gathering input on the current state of the science on minority health and health disparities. Experts from NIMHD, other NIH Institutes and Centers, and the public will provide insights in three foundational areas:

- **Etiology:** What are the social, environmental, and biological causes of health disparities? Which scientific models best explain these causes?
- **Methods and Measures:** What are the best methods for studying health disparities, including their causes and solutions?
- **Interventions:** What research, practice, and policy interventions show the greatest promise for reducing health disparities?

In Phase 2, working groups, consisting of invited experts from different fields, will review insights into the current state of the science that were collected during Phase 1. During workshops on the three foundational areas, the working groups will help define an improved future by addressing research gaps, challenges and opportunities.

The answers to these and other questions will serve as a framework to guide NIMHD's research agenda in the next decade.

Where We Are in the Process

In spring 2015, NIMHD issued a request for information (RFI) to the public in order to gather input on the current state of minority health and health disparities research. Throughout the summer, the Institute received responses from individuals and organizations representing academia, the medical profession, and community-based health sectors.

NIMHD used this input to help describe the current state of the science in the three foundational areas: etiology, methods and measures, and interventions. The findings of Phase 1 are being drafted and will be used in Phase 2 to define where NIMHD should go to advance the field of minority health and health disparities research and how best to get there.

What Is the Next Step?

In spring 2016, NIMHD will hold working sessions to gather input on the optimal future state for minority health and health disparities research. These sessions will help identify opportunities to advance the science of health disparities and minority health research. More information will be posted soon.