

University of Michigan Offers New Tool to Understand, Measure Health Disparities

The recent hurricane disasters in the Gulf Coast have emphasized the health and social disparities that underlie American society, prompting a need for a shared understanding of what constitutes health disparity and how its definition impacts government policy.

A new tool can be found in the University of Michigan School of Public Health's newly released "Measuring Health Disparities," an interactive, CD-ROM-based course, free from the Michigan Public Health Training Center (MPHTC).

The CD-ROM's self-paced, three-hour format enables a broad spectrum of participants to develop common ground for understanding health disparities, learn what various measures of health disparities reveal and discover how to calculate these measures. The CD-ROM includes interactive exercises and review questions to help guide and reinforce learning.

"With such common ground established, we can more effectively mount efforts to monitor and reduce health disparities," said Dr. George A. Kaplan, director of the Center for Social Epidemiology and Population Health at the School of Public Health and a leading health disparities researcher.

The course offers continuing education credits for nurses, health educators (CHES) and physicians and an MPHTC certificate for all participants who successfully complete the course. It is helpful, though not required, to have a background in statistics, epidemiology or other sciences for ease of understanding later portions of the course.

To supplement the training, "Measuring Health Disparities" has a companion Web site, <http://measuringhealthdisparities.org>. Through this site, users are able to register their CD-ROM, access the password, and apply for continuing education credits. Blogs on the Web site provide a forum for discussing data, initiatives, research and methods in measuring health disparities.

"Measuring Health Disparities" is free and can be ordered from the Michigan Public Health Training Center through the online registration system at <http://measuringhealthdisparities.org/> or by phone at (734) 615-9493.

This project was made possible with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) the Center for Social Epidemiology and Population Health, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Prevention Research Center of Michigan. The course content was developed by Dr. John Lynch and Dr. Sam Harper, formerly of the University of Michigan School of Public Health and currently at McGill University.

For more information on HRSA's Public Health Training Center network, please visit <http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=780>.