

Health Equity

Reducing disparities to increase patient adherence and improve health outcomes

These are real-life challenges that patients face each day. Challenges that result in health disparities – preventable differences in people’s ability to achieve optimal health.



Maria needs kidney dialysis treatments three times a week, but she doesn’t speak English and is unsure how to schedule her appointments.



Wayne complained of symptoms that indicate he is at risk for colon cancer. But he is still hesitant to schedule a colonoscopy – he feels that if he has cancer, it is God’s will.



Jasmin has reasons to be concerned and knows she should get a mammogram, however, the nearest facility is more than 50 miles from her home.

Who’s at risk for health disparities?

Disparities exist for a variety of reasons. Certain populations may encounter barriers in the health care delivery system and variations in the quality of health care they receive. Other segments of the population may suffer from a higher prevalence of certain conditions and/or may be diagnosed at a later or more severe stage of the disease. Additionally,

social determinants such as economic and social conditions in a community may also play a significant role. A multitude of factors can influence a person’s health status and outcomes, including gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, language, culture, geography, sexual orientation, age, and disability.



The health care professional's role in driving equitable health care

Cigna is committed to reducing health disparities by providing resources and information to help you and your staff communicate effectively with patients and understand their cultural and social context.

The challenges health care professionals face in providing quality health care to all of their patients will continue to grow as the population continues to diversify in the United States. Disparities stem from many factors beyond the physician-patient encounter. Having the knowledge and ability to identify potential cultural disparities and barriers to effective care are critical for improving health outcomes. By being culturally competent in health care, health care professionals can understand their patients' diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors, and customize treatment to meet patients' social, cultural, and linguistic needs.

Breaking down barriers

As an important part of our commitment to working with you to help support the delivery of quality health care to our customers and to help improve their health and well-being, it is our goal to break down cultural barriers. We want you to be aware that Cigna offers resources that can help to create an optimal experience for you and your patients who face these challenges.

Here is how we broke down barriers to help Maria, Wayne, and Jasmin:

Maria – We mailed Maria a **low-literacy bilingual pictorial postcard** urging her to call our nurse. The Nurse Case Manager was able to work with Maria and her physician's office to arrange for a translator at office visits and to help her schedule her kidney dialysis treatments. By speaking with someone in her preferred language who was familiar with her customs and beliefs, Maria was able to schedule and attend her treatments.

Wayne – We mailed Wayne a **personalized, health prevention reminder letter** to make sure he understood the importance of the colorectal screening available to him. The letter urged Wayne to schedule an appointment with his physician. Wayne made the appointment and was able to talk with his physician about the importance of this health screening. He agreed to schedule the colonoscopy.

Jasmin – Our Customer Service Representative **helped Jasmin find a traveling mammography facility**. Together, they located a facility closer to home, where Jasmin could schedule and attend her appointment.

Cultural competency training and resources

We believe in providing the tools necessary to help physicians and their staff build skills to better understand their patients, and to more effectively communicate and interact with patients in cross-cultural encounters. Cultural competency resources are available to you and your staff at no cost to you on the Cigna for Health Care Professionals secure website. Log in to **CignaforHCP.com** and click on "Resources."

Learn how you and your staff can help reduce barriers to quality health care.

Log on to **CignaforHCP.com** for free training courses and articles.



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