

# Laying the Foundation for Creating an Institute for Health Equity Research at Children's National Hospital

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## Background and Significance

Accumulating evidence indicates that structural and interpersonal discrimination may adversely impact health.<sup>1,2,3</sup> To address these inequities, it is imperative that we take an equity science approach. This approach includes the examination of patterns and factors that contribute to health inequities and the development of evidence-based interventions to achieve health equity through study design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination. Few hospitals have established institutes and centers for health equity research.

## Objective

To lay the foundation for a health equity research institute at Children's National Hospital.

## Methods

We conducted nine key informant interviews using a snowball sampling approach. The interviews included both internal and external leaders. Leaders internal to Children's National Hospital were selected because of their role in vetting and resource commitment for a health equity research institute (n=5 interviews) and the external leaders were selected based on their role in health equity research institutes and centers at other institutions (n=4 interviews). Interviews were semi-structured and conducted using an interview guide to examine the facilitators and barriers to developing a health equity institute. The interview transcripts were reviewed and analyzed to identify themes and to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. Themes were categorized as facilitators and challenges. The SWOT analysis then informed the development of a proposal for the establishment of an Institute for Health Equity Research.

## Results

Through the thematic and SWOT analysis, several distinct themes emerged. The facilitators, strengths and opportunities included the timeliness of the proposal, strong foundation in health equity research, increased government funding for equity research, opportunities for community engagement and collaborations with government and private sector, and reputation building. Challenges, opportunities, and threats included current financial climate may limit donor investments, transitioning leadership internally may impact institutional priorities, and the success of the institute will depend, in part, on the engagement of leadership. Distinct themes were identified by internal and external key informants while some of these were shared across the two groups.

## Discussion

Overall, we found that both internal and external key informants agreed that developing a health equity institute is an important and timely endeavor that could help distinguish the institution as a leader in this growing area of research. There are important challenges that need to also be considered, such as institutional priorities and funding opportunities and availability. This work is the first step towards the creation of a health equity institute at Children's National Hospital. The work has helped inform the development of a proposal for the Institute which will now be further refined through collaborations with the Development and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offices so that it can be shared with potential donors and disseminated across hospital leadership. Given the adverse impact that racism has on health, it is imperative that we, as a large, pediatric hospital in Washington, DC make a commitment to identifying and mitigating health inequities to improve the care and health of the children and communities we serve.