




Collective
Intelligence

powered by  HCG

Achieving health equity

*A focused approach to
redefining our medical
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By the HCG Health Disparities and Inequities Council

Our world keeps changing. Our society, including healthcare professionals (HCPs), patients, and their families and care givers, is more socially aware, more “plugged in,” and increasingly in touch with the realities of how access to healthcare can vary across communities. These audiences are often more educated, are actively seeking new information, and expect industries and governments to know and do better—which is starting to happen.

We’ve seen a dramatic and genuine increase in financial commitments, partnerships and programmes from pharma to address the topic of health disparities and inequities. While there are data from Accenture reinforcing the importance

and priority of health equity (93% of healthcare executives deem it important, and 89% confirm that it is part of their core business strategy), operationalising efforts, particularly for the medical communications industry, to address health disparities and inequities can still appear to be an uphill task.

At Healthcare Consultancy Group (HCG), we have put forward a framework for our teams to leverage with their clients: Explore, Educate, Embrace. Behind this framework is a simple and fundamental approach—we need to develop and disseminate content using the language of patients from their perspective. ▶

Explore

To fully appreciate the breadth and depth of the impact of disparities and inequities in a disease space or therapeutic area, we must first immerse ourselves in research to understand what literature and information already exist. Often, we find that the data are lacking, or that multiple sources need to be consulted and integrated. We can promote the availability of data from diverse populations or highlight when such evidence is limited. Other various strategies can be employed to better understand these gaps and their implications for our clients, such as social listening, literature reviews or stakeholder partnerships.

Having a strong understanding of the patient population is critical. We're not only referring to clinical risk factors or demographics but also to key psychosocial and ethnocultural factors. What are those social determinants of health that affect the likelihood of receiving a timely and accurate diagnosis and impact the care that the patient might receive or have access to? We can build this Explore mindset into our work using the same techniques we use in our daily efforts, and by also expanding our view to gain a more holistic picture of the patient and therapeutic area ecosystem.

Educate

Education is a core component of our role in the medical communications industry, so there are numerous ways we can incorporate a focus on addressing health inequities and disparities into the content we produce and the way we produce it. What social and cultural barriers might the patient population in question be facing? What health literacy gaps exist that we need to address? Is this channel going to reach my intended audience? Does the audience even have broadband service? These are some simple questions we should start asking ourselves.

The subtle shift in our approach to content can dramatically change the quality and utility of the output that we create for both HCPs and patients. For example, we can produce materials in the appropriate language, formats and channels that are readily accessible by diverse populations, to help empower patients in owning their healthcare. This can not only help patients make well-informed decisions, but can also ensure that physicians are better equipped to address the healthcare needs of the specific populations they serve.

Diverse representation is also key, both in terms of the voices we include and how we promote. It is a critical way in which we can enhance our communication efforts. But beyond these measures, we need to consider how these discussions are communicated with the intended audience, using cultural, linguistic and community-based partnerships as tools to facilitate conversation.

Embrace


Addressing health inequities must become a part of our identity and embraced in our daily work; it must be at the forefront of our endeavours. Ensuring we have access to the right trainings, new standards to ensure the collection and interpretation of unbiased data for diverse populations, and an inclusive mindset in our work can help us work toward achieving health equity.

Our industry is responsible for communicating vital information on therapies that have the power to save lives. The Explore, Educate, Embrace framework can help drive tangible health equity programmes in medical communications that can improve patients' lives. This responsibility is an important one, and addressing health disparities and inequities deserves our full focus and attention to help ensure that all patients receive healthcare in an equitable manner. ●

¹ <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/nine-out-of-ten-healthcare-executives-say-that-health-equity-initiatives-are-a-top-business-priority-according-to-accenture-and-himss-insights.htm>. Accessed 6 October 2022



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Healthcare Consultancy Group

Healthcare Consultancy Group (HCG) is a global leader in medical communications – 8 agencies united in a common vision: to accelerate product understanding and acceptance, bringing clients' medicines closer to the patients who need them.

With global offices approaching 1,000 staff spanning North America, Europe and Asia, HCG is an incubator for the relentlessly curious. Our appetite for creating strategies that lead to better patient outcomes is never satisfied.

HCG's agencies include Chameleon, Health Science Communications, Lumen Value & Access, ProEd Communications, ProEd Regulatory, Synergy, and The Scienomics Group, with industry-leading digital and creative strategy from the HCG Engagement Group.

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