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RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America

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Agenda for Today



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Overview, background and rationale

- Robin Mockenhaupt, PhD, RWJF

Outline of the RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America

- David Williams, PhD, Harvard University

Research Strategy for the Commission

- Paula Braveman, MD, University of CA - San Francisco

RWJF Interest in Health Care Disparities



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- Targeted efforts to improve the quality of care for certain diseases, cardiovascular health, diabetes
- Research to document the extent of racial and ethnic health care disparities and evaluate potential solutions
- Efforts to understand the extent to which hospitals, health plans, etc were collecting race and ethnicity data on patients to identify gaps in care
- Learning projects with hospitals to test interventions to improve the quality of care for minority patients
- Working in 20 regions across the country to improve health care in both inpatient and outpatient settings

RWJF's Interest in Vulnerable Populations



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To support promising ideas that address health and health care problems in the context of the social factors — poverty, education and housing — that affect society's most vulnerable people

- Identify and develop new ideas and models
- Promote sustainability, diffusion and replication of successful models
- Fund clusters of grants in specific areas

Reducing “Health” Disparities: Broadening the Focus



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What We've Learned So Far



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- **Lack of awareness about the problems and lack of policy action**
- **Little distinction between health & health care**
- **Strong feeling that individuals are responsible for their own health**
- **Need a bridge between ideological and political differences; fresh approach may appeal to both parties**





Why Now?

- Scientific knowledge
- Policy and Legislative activity
- Media Attention
- Presidential Campaign in 2008





Why a Commission?

- Break through silos
- Raise visibility
- Develop fresh ideas and solutions





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- **Increase knowledge about the relationships between social factors and health**
- **Generate concern and motivate efforts to address the problem of health inequalities**
- **Foster and inform constructive public discourse about ways to reduce these inequalities**
- **Identify and prioritize the adoption of potential individual, public and private sector solutions**

Improving Health for All in in Our National Interests



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“Improving population health would be more than a statistical accomplishment. It could enhance the productivity of the workforce and boost the national economy, reduce health care expenditures, and most important, improve people’s lives. But in an absence of a strong political voice from the less fortunate themselves, it is incumbent on health care professionals...to become champions for population health. This sense of purpose resonates with our deepest professional values...”

Healthy Competition



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“Americans take great pride in asserting that we are number one in terms of wealth, Nobel Prizes, and military strength. Why don’t we want to become number one in health?”

Schroeder, S.A. (2007). We can do better – improving the health of the American people. New England Journal of Medicine, 357(12), 1221-1228.

Because There's More to Health than Health Care



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