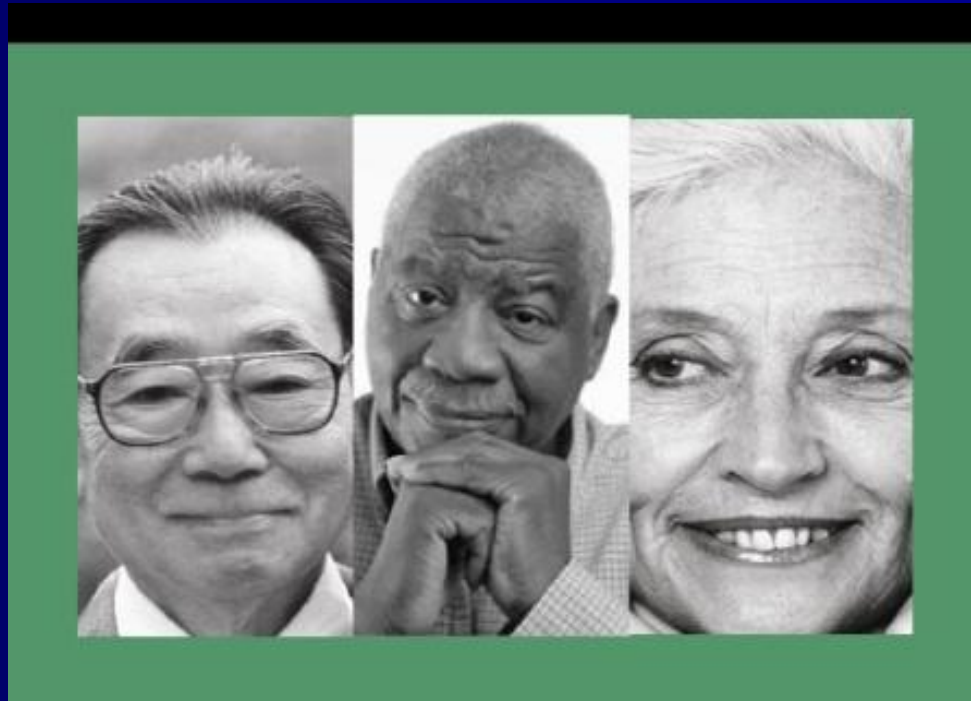


The Silver Lining to the Graying of America: A Public Health Perspective



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Outline of today's presentation:

- Overview of Public Health
- Building the bridge between Planning for Aging Populations and Public Health
- Innovations in Public Health and Planning

Part 1: Overview of Public Health

Beyond hand washing, vaccines, and bird flu.....

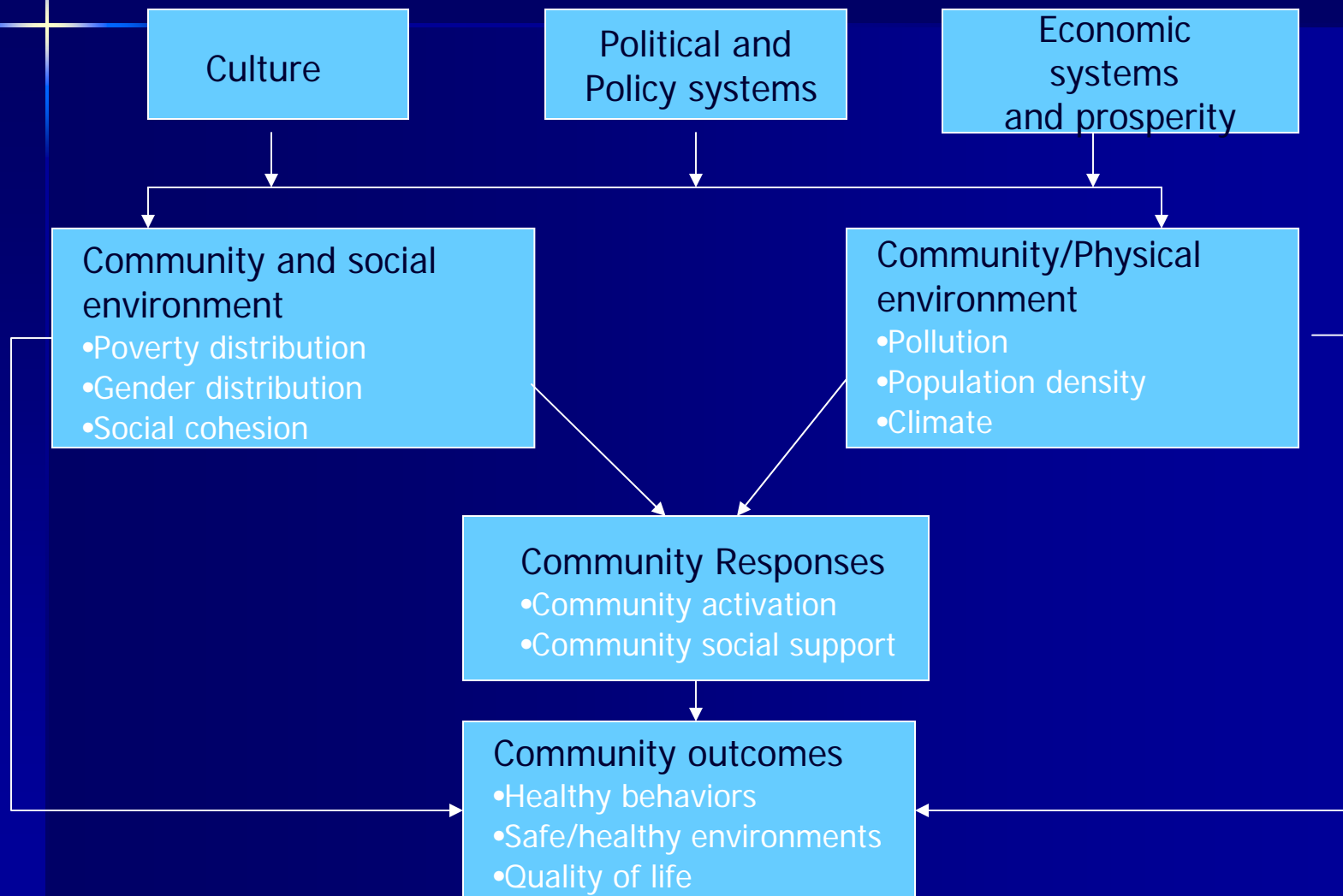
What is public health?

- Public Health's mission is to protect, promote, and restore the people's health.
- Public health uses science, specialized skills, and education to help to reduce the amount of disease, premature death, and disease-produced discomfort and disability.
- Often uses multi-disciplinary approaches for addressing problems.

Different areas of practice and research in public health

- Epidemiology (e.g., infectious disease, chronic disease)
- Health services research (e.g., access to care, health care delivery, moving research into best practices)
- Environmental and Occupational Health (e.g., consequences of pollution on health, injury prevention, work place stress)
- Social and behavioral sciences (e.g., social and community determinants of health, health communication)
- Health policy (e.g., health care policy, poverty)
- International health (e.g., clean water, infectious disease control)

Public health model to study community and health



Part 2: Building the bridge between Planning for Aging Populations and Public Health



The Silver Lining: Health patterns associated with aging are changing

In Minnesota, baby boomers:

- Have had higher standards of living
- Engage in more productive and physical activities
- Work later in life
- Have some better health behaviors (esp. smoking, better preventive care and screening)

*State of Aging and Health Report, 2007, CDC

The Not-So-Silver Lining....

BUT, in Minnesota, aging Baby Boomers also:

- Have one of the highest rates of obesity in the country.
- High rates of disability.
- Large proportion of the population lives in rural areas.
- Will need some level of informal care as they age.
- Will have a significant % who are immigrants.
- Face a growing gap between rich and poor.

*State of Aging and Health Report, 2007, CDC

Aging, physical activity, and safety



PROBLEM: Developing opportunities for physical activity (such as walkable and bike-able communities) is critical, but assuring those opportunities are safe for the elderly is equally important. Falls are one of the biggest causes of morbidity and mortality.

POSSIBLE PLANNING SOLUTIONS:

- Longer lights at intersection crossings.
- Pavement treatments should be even (NOT gravel!)
- For urban communities, “green” heated sidewalks to reduce falls on ice.
- Develop areas for dual activity use such as community centers and bike/CC ski paths, etc.

Aging and rural health services



PROBLEM: General health services are important, but greater resources are especially needed for dentists, eye care, and mental health services

POSSIBLE PLANNING SOLUTIONS:

- Broadband availability and access for tele-medicine.
- Community resources in rural areas for transportation services.
- Housekeeping and health “visitor” services.
- Hospice, especially in rural areas.
- Build communities that attract people across generations, not just the elderly, so services are not far away.

Aging and Social Welfare



PROBLEM: Keeping an aging population socially active is critical for long-term health and wellness.

POSSIBLE PLANNING SOLUTIONS:

- Developing work or volunteer opportunities, especially inter-generational (<http://www.epa.gov/aging>)
- Plan for intergenerational housing (e.g., “in-law” apartments, multi-family duplexes, caregiver accommodation).
- Plan for community building and opportunities for social engagement, especially for aging and retired men.

Part 3: Innovations in Public Health and Planning



Design for Health (DFH) project

- <http://www.designforhealth.net/>

"...to bridge the gap between the emerging research base on community design and healthy living and the every-day realities of local government planning."

- Joint project between BC/BS of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota
- Partners include Cornell University and University of Colorado

Areas of common interest

- Air Quality
- Noise
- Climate change
- Environmental and housing quality
- Food
- Water quality
- Physical activity
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Health care access
- Mental health
- Social Capital

DFH includes:

Comprehensive Plan Review Checklist that includes:

- * Land Use Element
- * Transportation Element
- * Water Resources Element
- * Parks & Open Space Element
- * Urbanization, Redevelopment, Economic Development

Take home messages

- Demographics of this aging population will be different.
- Baby boomers will age differently than previous generations.
- New thinking about design are necessary.
- Public health and planning both have similar approaches to addressing unmet needs.
- Integrating public health information and research will help target the appropriate health, safety, and public welfare concerns for planning.