

Taking Action in Your Community—Health Equity

UNIT 2 RECAP

The focus of unit 2 was to look at the impact that epidemics, pandemics, and newly emerging infectious diseases have on the health of communities. There are many challenges that come with sharing information about the prevention and treatment of disease, especially in areas where there is a lack of equity in healthcare. As the world faced COVID-19, the race to share information and engineer a vaccine became a global priority. The process of taking a vaccine from start to finish is no small task, and understanding the molecular mechanisms that viruses use to

transmit disease is the first step. Viruses can hijack and modify a cell's system of genetic expression and protein production while also evading the body's immune system trying to destroy them. Vaccines are engineered to work against specific types of viruses such as the mRNA vaccines used to fight COVID-19. The vaccine was designed to help immune responses identify proteins found on the surface of the virus before it could infect cells. Once a vaccine is created, it must undergo to be approved for use and manufactured, yet the challenges do not end there.

Education and availability are important final pieces in stopping the spread of an infectious disease. Social awareness campaigns can be wide-reaching and impactful ways to get information to large groups quickly by spreading a message via the internet, television, and social media. These multimedia campaigns use technology to provide all community members with education about infectious diseases, new treatments, and healthcare availability to try to ensure healthcare equity to all—especially when faced with the threat of emerging infectious diseases.

INSPIRATION 1

Telehealth and telemedicine services are ways for physicians to remotely provide their services. With COVID-19 restrictions, these became important ways for patients to receive care. The CDC reported that in 2021, over a third of adults used telehealth services. However, there were differences in use according to education and socioeconomic levels, and race. For those lacking reliable transportation or health insurance, telemedicine provides an accessible, affordable way to receive healthcare.



PROBLEM

How can we improve awareness of and access to telehealth services for patients of all demographics and socioeconomic levels?

SOLUTION DESIGN DRIVING QUESTIONS

What is a telehealth platform and what services does it provide for patients?

What are the advantages and drawbacks to using telehealth services for treatment?

Who are the major users of telehealth?

Can a telehealth platform be designed that can provide healthcare access to those without health insurance or with limited insurance?

RESOURCES

[Telehealth as a Means of Enabling Health Equity—PMC](#)

[Telemedicine Use Among Adults: United States, 2021](#)

[The State of Telehealth Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic—PMC](#)

[Telehealth Gives a Free Health Clinic a Lifeline to its Patient Population](#)

[Ensuring Equity in Telehealth—California Health Care Foundation](#)

[9 key steps to advance equity in emerging telehealth landscape | American Medical Association](#)

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INSPIRATION 2

When the first COVID-19 vaccine was approved in December 2020, people lined up at clinics and put their names on waiting lists to protect themselves from the virus. The World Health Organization reported that 3 million people died globally. While the vaccine certainly prevented millions from contracting and spreading the virus, there were many who were skeptical about the efficacy of the new mRNA vaccine and worried about its possible side effects.

PROBLEM

How can we ensure that the next generation of healthcare patients are educated on how vaccinations work to help to prevent the spread of viruses that threaten local and global health?

SOLUTION DESIGN DRIVING QUESTIONS

What national or state science standards require education about viruses and vaccines?

What are the misconceptions about viruses and how vaccines work to prevent viral diseases?

What groups are the least likely to be vaccinated for infectious diseases?

How can schools, workplaces, and clinics educate people and gain support for vaccination?

What are the most effective ways to provide and deliver scientific and medical information to children and adults?

RESOURCES

[7 reasons people don't get vaccinated against COVID-19 | Novant Health | Healthy Headlines](#)

[Explaining How Vaccines Work | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Myths vs. Facts: Making Sense of COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation | The Brink | Boston University](#)

[How the science of vaccination is taught \(or not\) in US schools | The Hechinger Report](#)

