

BOOK REVIEWS

Lasky T. *What Pharmacists Need to Know About Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities.* Wakefield, RI: MIE Resources; 2013, 76 pp, \$27.95 (softcover), ISBN 9780615752518.

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In the introduction to *What Pharmacists Need to Know About Racial and Ethnic Disparities*, Tamar Lasky states that the book's purpose is "to provide materials for a 1 to 4 hour unit on the interrelationships between health, race/ethnicity, and the role of pharmacists in eliminating health disparities." The target audience is pharmacy students in the second through fourth years. Content in this 76-page book is organized into the following 6 chapters: "Concepts of Race and Ethnicity" (chapter 1), "Classification of Race and Ethnicity in the United States" (chapter 2), "Health Disparities Associated with Race and Ethnicity" (chapter 3), "Mechanisms and Explanations of Health Disparities" (chapter 4), "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Pharmacy Practice" (chapter 5), and "The Pharmacist's Commitment to Eliminating Health Disparities (chapter 6)." Each chapter begins with a list of "key concepts" to guide the reader and ends with references and questions for discussion or brief descriptions of additional learning activities.

The author's approach has several strengths. Most importantly, Lasky carefully defines race and ethnicity and illustrates how understanding of these concepts by scholars and by the general public has changed with time and is different in different societies. These definitions, which appear in Chapter 1, are accompanied by examples of census data collected in countries outside the United States and followed by explanations of the classification system for race and ethnicity used in the United States for the census and for measuring and monitoring health disparities. Pharmacy educators who are developing materials and approaches for teaching health disparities and cultural competence topics will appreciate the author's suggestions for assignments and learning activities. Examples of these ideas include examining census forms, preparing reports to illustrate and explain specific health disparities in detail, and generating examples from students' pharmacy practice experiences. Several of these ideas, as well as examples provided within the text, could be transformed into small group activities for a flipped classroom approach. Finally, the author explains causes of racial and ethnic health disparities as "direct" and

"indirect" pathways, with direct pathways stemming from factors such as stereotyping, discomfort when interacting with minorities, and personally mediated racism. If the time in a curriculum that is devoted to health disparities and cultural competence is brief, this construction of explanations is an effective segue to introducing information pertaining to personal and organizational cultural competence development and the role of pharmacy in eliminating health disparities.

The author clearly states that the focus of the text is racial and ethnic disparities. However, this focus also is an important limitation, because the author does not explain that while an understanding of health disparities from the point of view of race and ethnicity is critically important for pharmacists, the framework for measuring health disparities in the United States includes priority populations described not only by race and ethnicity, but also by income, gender, age (under 18 years and 65 years and over), geographic location, sexual orientation, disability, and special or chronic care needs. In my opinion, a pharmacy educator who selects this book for students would need to supplement it with a brief overview of the data sources, indicators, and monitoring of health disparities by government agencies such as the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Another limitation that I believe would affect a student's understanding of the scope and causes of disparities is the absence of an explanation of the concept of social determinants of health. Although the chapter "Mechanisms and Explanations of Health Disparities" provides a conceptual framework, in the form of a chart, for pathways between race/ethnicity and health disparities, the framework does not include clear links between the elements of the framework and other populations who suffer health disparities.

Contemporary textbooks about communication in pharmacy practice include general information about cultural competence and the need for pharmacists to develop it. One text, *Essentials of Cultural Competence in Pharmacy Practice* by Kimberly Vess Halbur and Duane A. Halbur, is devoted to this subject. *What Pharmacists Need to Know About Racial and Ethnic Disparities* would complement these texts in a single course in which students learn cultural competence and health disparities topics.

In spite of the limitations described above, the author achieves the purpose stated in the introduction. I would recommend this text as a resource to pharmacy educators who teach the topic of health disparities.

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