Let’s Start a Conversation About Health... and Not Talk About Health Care at All

Discussion Guide

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About the Video

This five minute video presents ideas to reframe a conversation about HEALTH. The video highlights that health is about much more than access to medical care. **Health begins where we live, learn, work and play.** Everyone has different opportunities for health, largely influenced by our social and economic conditions.

Using this broad view of health, the video emphasizes that we ALL have a role to play when it comes to creating equal opportunities for health. It encourages all of us – students, teachers, families, farmers, business people, seniors, service providers, community leaders – to **Start a Conversation About Health... And Not Talk About Health Care at All.**

Consider the following before watching the video:
- How would you define health?
- What causes someone to be healthy or sick?
- Are some people more at risk of being sick?
- What is being done, or could be done, to improve someone’s health?

You can watch & share the video online at: [www.elginhealth.on.ca/conversation](http://www.elginhealth.on.ca/conversation)

Key Messages

1. Health improves at every rung up the income and social ladder.
2. Everyone has different opportunities for health that are largely determined by our social and economic conditions.
3. We all have a role to play to **Take Action** to improve our community’s health.

David’s Story – An Example of Health Equity

Our health is influenced by a broad range of factors. These include genetics, individual lifestyles and behaviours, as well as the social, economic, and physical environments in which we live.

**Let’s Start a Conversation...** presents the story of David. David is in the emergency department because of a cough that won’t go away. He started smoking again to relieve stress from dealing with issues in his apartment, while also balancing multiple jobs & taking care of his family. David’s limited education makes it difficult to find a secure full time job. Certainly, David’s health has been influenced by some of his personal choices and behaviours. His behaviours, however, have been influenced by some very challenging social and economic circumstances.
So... what does David’s story have to do with health equity?

Health inequities are differences in health status experienced by different groups of people that are systemic, socially produced, and unfair and unjust. In other words: The avoidable differences in health between groups that are caused by our living conditions (jobs, schools, housing, neighbourhoods, etc).

David is at greater risk of poor health because of his social and economic conditions. At each layer of David’s story, consider the root causes, and what that could mean for someone’s health.

Everyone has a story to tell about their health and the health of their community. You may even know your own ‘David’. Consider examples of others who may be at risk of health inequities. Think about and share your experiences with the social and economic factors that influence health.

What does local data tell us about health inequities in our community?

Income is one of the best predictors of health. People who have less money are more likely to have poor health. This graph shows people in Elgin-St. Thomas with the lowest income have the highest rates of heart disease.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2011/2012
Guide to Starting a Conversation

Below are some questions to consider or discuss in a group:

Beliefs: Before & After
We all hold certain beliefs about health: what makes us healthy and what makes us sick.
• Go back to the questions on page 2 that you considered before watching the video. Did your beliefs change after watching the video? How? Why or why not?

Key Messages
The video highlighted three key messages, outlined on page 2 of this discussion guide. With these messages in mind, consider the following:
• What determines whether we are sick or healthy? Keep pulling the layers back to consider the root causes.
• Why do we typically only think of health in terms of health care and personal behaviours? Where do these perceptions come from?
• Are some groups or members of our community more at risk of being unhealthy? Why?
• What social and economic conditions support and encourage healthy choices? What conditions do you feel most affect health in our community?
• What actions and policies at the local, provincial, and federal level might increase people’s opportunities to be healthy and reduce health inequity?

Community Focus
Health starts in the communities where we live, work, learn, and play. Our community represents great opportunities and resources to improve health and reduce health inequities.
• What kinds of things can we do to improve people’s health? (As individuals, communities, governments, etc)
• How can we make things better in our community? What are the greatest challenges? What additional resources are needed? Who are natural allies and partners?
• What initiatives are already underway in our community that can help improve health? How might we build off the momentum of these initiatives?

Take Action
The closing message of Let’s Start a Conversation... is, “Let’s get moving!” You can start by sharing this video, and starting conversations of your own.

www.elginhealth.on.ca/conversation

For more ideas and inspiration, check out Bridges Out of Poverty ‘Take Action’ campaign. Share how you will commit to making a difference in our community by connecting online at www.endpovertyinelgin.com