

# TAKING EQUITY SERIOUSLY

Dr Kwame McKenzie



# The pandemic exacerbated existing health inequities

**There were avoidable differences  
in health that we allowed to persist**

**We set up a pandemic response  
that widened existing health  
disparities**

**Medicare will need to deal with  
inequities caused by the  
pandemic and inequities linked  
to its own inability to deliver  
equitable care**

# Reasons for optimism



Search Canada

Donate now

About Us + Membership + Learning Health System + Policy and Advocacy + Events and Training

MENU

Canada.ca > Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) > Canada's response

## Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan

Home > Membership

### Community Health Equity Builders



Join today and be a part of the movement for health equity!

Join today and be a part of the movement for health equity!

The Community Health Equity Builders program is now open to non-profit organizations, networks and individuals who support the goals and mission of the Alliance for Healthier Communities, endorse the Health Equity Charter, and who are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities facing barriers to health and wellbeing. Alliance Builders Program participants can operate, work and/or live anywhere in the world. (Organizations that qualify for full Alliance membership are not eligible for the Community Health Equity Builders program.)



Services & Payments Community & People Business & Economic Development

City of Toronto / COVID-19 / COVID-19: Latest City of Toronto News / COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto

### COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto

If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, out if you should visit an assessment centre and where to go.

THE LOCAL

ISSUE



VACCINATING TORONTO

### Vaccinating Black Toronto

MAY 11, 2021

FEATURE BY TAYO BERO

Science Briefs Ontario Dashboard Key Resources Glossary About Us Our Partners Subscriptions

Category: [Health Equity & Social Determinants of Health](#)

## A Vaccination Strategy for Ontario COVID-19 Hotspots and Essential Workers

Sharmista Mishra, Nathan M. Stall, Huiting Ma, Ayodele Odutayo, Jeffrey C. Kwong, Upton Allen, Kevin

Vol. 23 Special Issue 2020 • www.healthcarequarterly.com

# Healthcare Quarterly

## PHYSICIANS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



Leveraging Patient Data  
Introducing Electronic Order Sets  
Effectiveness of Real-Time Locating  
Smartphones in the Clinical Setting

**What changes are needed for  
us to take equity seriously?**

# One joke and two stories...

# The joke

# Community driven, data-based improvements to the pandemic response in Toronto

# Black populations in Ontario

- 5% of Ontario's population
- More exposure to social determinants of health
- Higher risk of chronic illness, such as diabetes, hypertension, and sickle cell
- Persistent inequities in access to screening, care and supports
- Worse health outcomes

# Black Health Equity Working Group

- March 2020 high rates of covid-19 in UK and USA Black populations
- Rise of Black Lives Matter
- Birth of Black Health Equity Working Group
- Alignment of community, academics, service providers and government to decrease inequity



# Black Health Equity Working Group

- Data driven quantification for identification of disparities, monitoring and transparency
- Evidence informed, community driven, public health and policy solutions



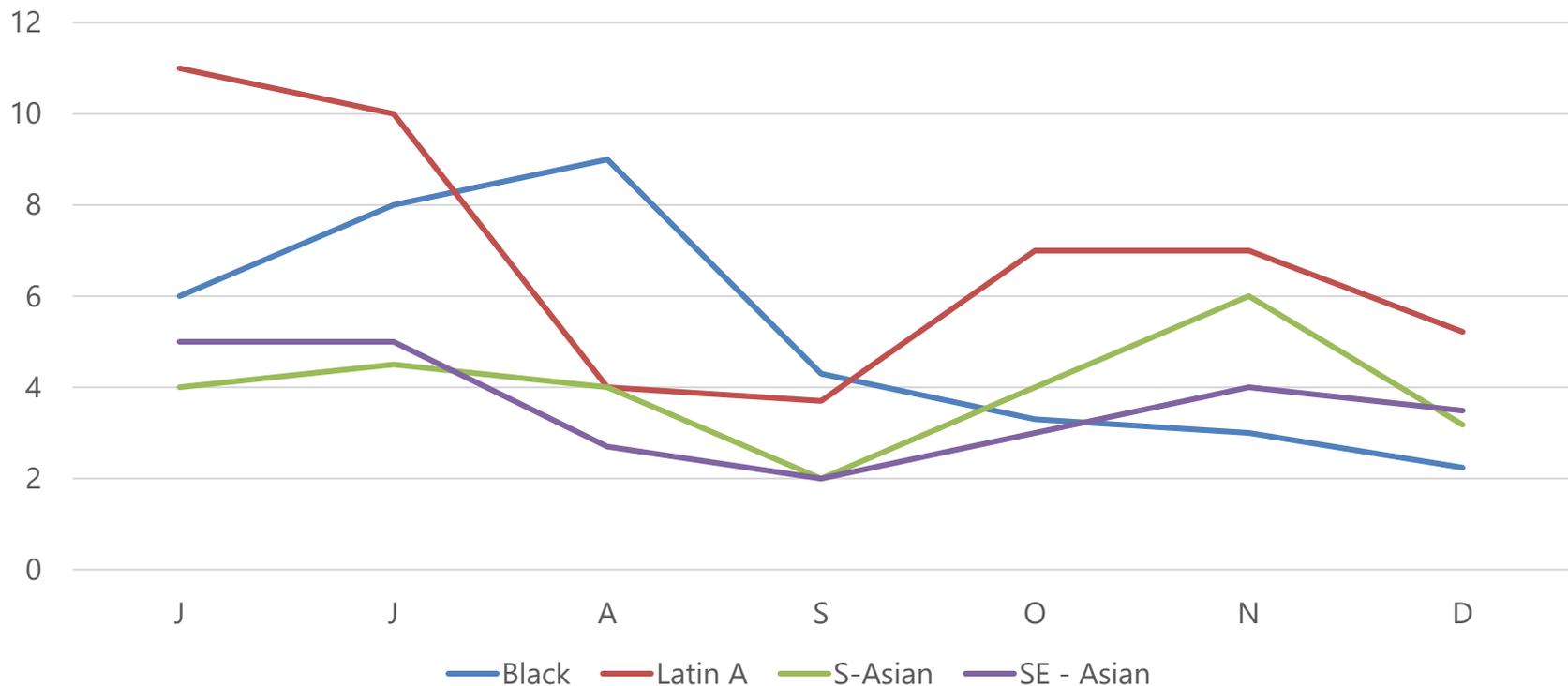
# Data helped build population based equity focused initiatives such as...

- Community multilingual public health campaign
- Community testing and pop-up testing sites
- Masks, sanitizer etc
- Free voluntary isolation site
- Eviction prevention advocacy
- Food security
- Emergency child-care
- Digital access
- Culturally-appropriate, multilingual counselling

# Toronto covid-19 community and data driven response decreased inequity

McKenzie 2021

Rate ratios of covid-19 for racialized groups vs white group;  
Toronto, June – December 2020



**The disparities were inequities, they were mainly avoidable.**

**Despite this success inequities  
increased during vaccination**

**How do we create a system that  
hardwires progress towards equity  
and ensures it endures?**

# Improving health equity by legislative reform

# Stephen Lawrence



# Some of the duties of public bodies under the UK's Race Relations Amendment Act

- Promote race equality
- Have a demonstrable plan for promoting and achieving race equality
- Monitor their impact on race equality

# We are lucky in Canada

# Models for health equity

- Action on differential risk
  - Health equity in all policies
  - Specific social determinants policies
- Improving health services
  - Building staff capacity
  - Building equitable interventions
  - Building equitable health systems

**More flexibility in Medicare funding may be needed to better meet the needs of different population groups.**

# Medicare reform: some ideas for discussion

- Do we need legislation that ensures that we do not have gross inequities in health access and outcomes?
- Should there be more strings attached to Federal funding of health or targeting to ensure equity?
- Should the adoption of new health technologies and social policy be linked to promotion of health equity?

Thank you...

@kwame\_mckenzie

