

nature
[**inside**view]



Profile Feature as seen in *Nature* 15th September 2022

HEALTH EQUITY ENABLES MORE INCLUSIVE HEALTH ECOSYSTEMS

A conversation with **CHARLOTTE OWENS**, Vice President, and Head of the Center for Health Equity and Patient Affairs (HEPA) at Takeda Pharmaceutical Company



Health, well-being and quality of life depend on many factors, and vary for people depending on where they were born, where they live and where they work. Charlotte Owens, explains how these issues of health inequity around the world have become central to Takeda's business model. In October 2020, Takeda created the Center for Health Equity and Patient Affairs (HEPA), led by Owens, to share knowledge and resources, increase early access to Takeda medicines, and collaborate with stakeholders and communities to tackle issues that are too big to solve alone.

What's meant by health equity?

Health equity means that everyone has a fair opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Healthy People 2030 defines health disparity as "a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage". Health disparities adversely affect people who have experienced greater obstacles based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographical location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion. Everyone deserves a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential.

Why are health inequities so important to address?

Today, when a child is born, how long and how well they live is predicted more by their location than their genetic code. Medical care accounts for only 10-20% of a person's health (Hood, C.M., *Am J Prev Med*, 2016), which indicates that the majority of our health attainment is driven by social determinants: the conditions where people are born, live, work, play and age. Until these social determinants are considered and are addressed, we cannot achieve health equity.

What are examples of health inequities?

How about the person whose emergency surgery kept them in hospital for days, who missed shifts at work and lost their job? Or the person who couldn't make it to the clinic because they lacked the money to pay for parking, and had to choose between paying for medicine and next month's rent? These real-life situations make big differences to people's health, irrespective of the quality of care they received. In order to change the situation, people need both quality medical care and health-promoting physical and social conditions in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

What is Takeda doing about health inequity?

Our goal is to help create a more inclusive ecosystem and, as a result, strengthen trust with communities and patients around the world. HEPA works with different Takeda teams and external partners to help identify and address health inequities, provide eligible patients early access to Takeda medicines, help accelerate diagnosis for children with rare diseases, and engage patients throughout the research and development process.

To advance health equity, we need to set measurable goals defined by patients and communities themselves. Communities know what they need - we just have to listen,

COMMUNITIES KNOW WHAT THEY NEED. WE JUST HAVE TO LISTEN, LEARN, CO-CREATE PROGRAMMES AND BRING IN THE RIGHT RESOURCES.

learn, co-create programmes and bring in the right resources. We are also working to build 'megacommunity' partnerships with organizations worldwide, across different industries, focused on addressing inequities - because no one entity can do this alone.

What has HEPA achieved so far?

Through partnership and co-creations, we've helped train 150 health-equity leaders in 30 countries and helped create 144 self-sufficient infrastructures operating independently. From a research hub in the Dominican Republic, to a clinical trial leadership programme in Vietnam, Takeda is creating partnerships to address health inequities in local communities. We've also helped create mechanisms in 85 different countries, involving more than 9,200 patients and 3,800 prescribing physicians, to provide patient access to medicines and engage in capacity-building in

communities. These are just a few examples of our impact, and there's still much more to do.

Why is it important to increase diversity in clinical trials?

Clinical trials should represent the patients who will ultimately use a treatment. Diversity in clinical trials helps to inform the evaluation of safety and effectiveness of new medicines. It can also address health inequities that come from lack of access to potentially lifesaving treatments.

How has Takeda been involved with the Nature Awards recognizing health equity?

Takeda's HEPA has a five-year partnership with Springer Nature to educate people about health equity and inspire them to help address health inequities in their communities. The first annual Nature Awards for Inclusive Health Research, which will be launched and begin accepting submissions on 13 September 2022, celebrates the contributions of those driving an inclusive approach to health research, and promotes a future of greater global health equality.

To learn more about the Nature Award, visit go.nature.com/3KATLyJ



Better Health, Brighter Future

Takeda is a global, values-based, R&D-driven biopharmaceutical company committed to discovering and delivering life-transforming treatments and vaccines that have a lasting impact on society.

Since our founding in 1781 in a market stall in Osaka, Japan, our values endure by putting patient needs first, building trust with society, strengthening our reputation, and developing the business - in that order.

www.takeda.com



