



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Office of the Vice-President, Health
UBC Health

Event Summary

VOICES FOR HEALTH EQUITY

A UBC Health and Public Scholars Initiative event presented by UBC
Connects at Robson Square



EVENT OVERVIEW

On November 4, 2024, UBC Health and the Public Scholars Initiative, in partnership with UBC Connects, hosted a dynamic half-day event, “Voices for Health Equity” at Robson Square. This gathering of over 100 interdisciplinary scholars, health equity advocates, students, and community members provided a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration on health equity, spotlighting innovative research and grassroots initiatives.

The event brought together a diverse array of participants committed to learning about, and tackling health inequities, fostering equity across the health sector. Here's a look back at the key highlights:

[Watch a two-minute video of event highlights!](#)

Download a PDF version of the event program on the [event website](#).

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC Robson Square is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔt (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations. We recognize, thank, and honor the people that have cared for the land since time immemorial.

EVENT PARTNERS



UBC Robson Square



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PRESENTATION SERIES



Mei-ling Wiedmeyer

What if health care truly recognized the unique needs of im/migrants?

Dr. Wiedmeyer highlighted the profound inequities in health experienced by im/migrants, and urged us to break down the existing systemic barriers. Watch the presentation to learn how culturally responsive care and structural changes can lead to more equitable outcomes.

[Watch Mei-ling's presentation here!](#)



Kennedy Borle

What happens when people can't access genetic services?

Kennedy highlighted gaps in Canada's genetic counselling landscape and advocated for systems that meet the diverse patient needs. This presentation uncovered strategies to create equitable access for those who might benefit from genetic counselling.

[Watch Kennedy's presentation here!](#)



Shelly Tognazzini

BCC3 Study Team

How can community-driven research drive impact?

The BCC3 team shared their innovative approach to community-based research, illustrating how commitment to relationship building and co-designed strategies turn research findings into actionable insights.



Tetiana Povshedna



Davi Pang

[Watch BCC3 Team's presentation here!](#)



[Watch Andrea's presentation here!](#)

Andrea Burrows

Can technology bridge gaps in health care access for families?

Andrea demonstrated the role of digital technology in care and how nurses can adapt digital tools to improve access and ensure equitable care, particularly for underserved families.



[Watch Jennifer's presentation here!](#)

Jennifer Black

What role does storytelling play in tackling food insecurity?

Dr. Black shared the Hungry Stories initiative, which blends art, research, and storytelling to spark conversations and inspire action toward ending hunger in Canada.



[Watch Jonathan's presentation here!](#)

Jonathan Easey

How can Queer voices lead to better HIV prevention?

Jonathan explored how Queer patient's insights on PrEP can transform health education and foster equitable access to vital prevention services.



Laura Yvonne Bulk

What does representation mean in creating culturally safe care?

Drawing on her own story, Dr. Bulk emphasized how diverse lived experiences, and cultural safety can reshape health care professions and improve access and quality.

[Watch Laura's presentation here!](#)



Manvi Bhalla

How do we connect environmental justice to health equity?

Manvi highlighted the intersections of environmental justice and health, advocating for inclusive, participatory approaches to policy and driving change.

[Watch Manvi's presentation here!](#)

Use the QR code to watch all event videos!



A Note on Inclusivity & Diversity of Voices:

While we celebrate the voices present, we also acknowledge that many critical perspectives and lived experiences were not represented. Advancing health equity requires ongoing commitment to creating more accessible, inclusive, and representative spaces for dialogue and action. This event provided an opportunity to reflect, connect, and collectively explore pathways to a more equitable future in health.

SPEAKER PANEL

After the presentations, the speakers participated in a panel to answer questions from event participants, moderated by PSI scholar Tetiana Povshedna.

[Watch the speaker panel here!](#)

The panel speakers responded to participant questions about social barriers that impact patient advocacy and the importance of community engagement in health research. This engaging panel discussion emphasized the value of collaboration and lived experiences in shaping a more equitable health system.

Event participants asked about actionable strategies for advancing health equity, including improving cultural sensitivity in care, addressing systemic barriers for underserved populations (e.g., immigrants, rural communities, and those with disabilities), and leveraging community engagement and storytelling for impact. They also sought insights on navigating data challenges, integrating technology, balancing advocacy work with academic pursuits, and expanding equity efforts to underrepresented regions and groups.

DIALOGUE GROUPS

Policy Oriented Work in Shifting Political Landscapes

Facilitator: Alexa Norton, PSI Health Equity Stream Scholar

This group explored strategies for navigating political changes while advancing advocacy goals, emphasizing the need for adaptability and collaborative approaches to remain effective and impactful in dynamic environments.

Highlights:

- Collaboration is crucial to respond to political changes, recognizing that even small adjustments can contribute to significant overall impact.
- Elevating issues outside of current political agendas requires engaging individuals who can bridge diverse perspectives.

- Relationship-building is key to advancing advocacy efforts, particularly with government insiders, and involves leveraging informal channels for knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- Empathy and active listening are foundational to fostering trust and addressing challenges with interest holders across diverse viewpoints

Calls to Action:

- Utilize creative methods to disseminate accessible information to policymakers
- Prioritize the voices and experiences of those directly affected by policies to guide decision-making
- Focus on actionable academic research, ensuring it is applicable to real-world issues
- Establish clear metrics as indicators of change to measure the impact of policy-oriented work

Observations by Sara Singh, Collaborative Project Assistant, UBC Health

Driving Change Through Community Engagement

Facilitator: Emily Giroux, PSI Scholar

This group explored the transformative potential of engaging communities and individuals with lived experience in research, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives to drive impactful change.

Highlights:

- Relationship-building is an essential aspect of initiating the community engagement process. As one participant noted, “It takes ten cups of tea to build trust.”
- Building genuine, transparent, and reciprocal relationships is a way of challenging colonial and oppressive norms and empowering community members.
- Effective community engagement requires leveraging existing networks, ensuring team diversity, and fostering collaborations throughout project initiatives.
- Addressing barriers such as limited time and funding is necessary to sustain meaningful engagement and amplify its impact.

Calls to Action:

- Organizations and institutions must commit to providing the necessary resources (e.g. time and funding) to support sustained community engagement.
- Involve community leaders in decision-making roles to ensure transparency and alignment with community needs.
- Advocate for innovative research methods and policies that prioritize inclusivity and empower equity-denied voices
- Foster a culture of active listening and patience, recognizing that meaningful engagement takes time, but yields long-term benefits

Observations by Priyal Ketan Tailor, Collaborative Project Assistant, UBC Health

EVENT FEEDBACK AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Who Attended

The event brought together a diverse group of participants including UBC students, faculty, and staff, alongside members of the public, community organizations, health professionals, policymakers, and people with lived experience. This mix of perspectives fostered rich discussions and meaningful exchanges, underscoring the focus on interdisciplinary and inclusive engagement.

What We Learned

Attendees gained new perspectives on health equity with 89% strongly or somewhat agreeing that they learned something new. Key insights included community engagement practices, strategies for fostering equity, and actionable ideas for improving research and practice. Discussions inspired critical reflection and collaboration, emphasizing equity-informed methods and supporting marginalized communities.

What Inspired Us

The event fostered meaningful engagement with 79% of attendees agreeing that it provided new opportunities for collaboration. Participants were inspired to connect with others, join networks, explore actionable steps in health equity, and explore how community voices and interdisciplinary approaches can drive change. Some feedback highlighted the importance of transparency in engaging individuals with lived experiences in decision-making processes.

Our Understanding of Health Equity

Most attendees (84%) reported an improved understanding of health equity, with specific interests spanning mental health, Indigenous health, enhancing patient-provider communication, and addressing systemic inequities. Feedback underscored the need for inclusive practices and increasing diversity and representation in future events.

Recommendations for Future Events

- **Inclusivity:** Increase accessibility and representation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized speakers and attendees
- **Accessibility:** Support for attendees travelling from outside the area, more options for accessible seating and dietary restrictions
- **Engagement:** Offer fewer, but more in-depth presentations, facilitate more breakout sessions, and broaden outreach to students and community members
- **Outcomes:** Continue fostering connections and actionable insights that empower attendees to address health equity challenges collaboratively

Looking Ahead

The majority of participants expressed strong interest in attending future events, with suggestions to prioritize themes such as mental health equity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and actionable strategies for systemic change. Attendees emphasized the value of creating more inclusive spaces and fostering long-term engagement across diverse communities.

**Event participants, presenters, facilitators, partners,
and organizers – THANK YOU!**