

Panel Discussion—Factors Contributing to Disparities in MS Care and Outcomes

Resource Guide



Nurses play a critical role in addressing modifiable barriers to equitable care and improved outcomes by supporting timely referrals, facilitating access to treatment, improving communication and care coordination, and connecting individuals with appropriate resources.



“Determinant” or “Driver”?

Is it a social **determinant** of health or **driver** of health? Actually, it's both! The terms can be used interchangeably when describing strengths, challenges, and barriers affecting the health and well-being of patients. However, there has been more of a trend towards using “driver” over the traditional “determinant” terminology. Here's why:

Determinant can have a sense of finality and can lead to a feeling that a person's health fate is predetermined and unchangeable.

Driver infers conditions that are moveable and modifiable, empowering individuals to focus on resilience and change in their circumstances.

National Association of Community Health Centers. Social Drivers vs. Social Determinants: Using Clear Terms. Available at: <https://www.nachc.org/social-drivers-vs-social-determinants-using-clear-terms/#:~:text=Social%20determinants%20of%20health,understandable%20term%20that%20communities%20prefer.> Accessed on February 11, 2026

Key Terms

Culturally Responsive Care: Care that respects and responds to patients' cultural beliefs, values, language, and lived experiences, and incorporates them into care planning.

Health Disparities: Differences in health outcomes, access to care, or quality of care that are often linked to social, economic, or environmental disadvantage.

Health Equity: The goal of ensuring everyone has a fair and just opportunity to achieve their best possible health, which may require various levels or types of support.

Health Inequities: Health differences that are *systematic, avoidable, and unjust*, often driven by social structures, policies, or discrimination.

Health Literacy: A person's ability to find, understand, and use health information to make informed decisions about their care.

Modifiable Barriers: Barriers that can be addressed or reduced through changes in nursing practice, workflows, education, advocacy, or resource connection.

Social Determinants/Drivers of Health (SDOH): Non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, such as housing, transportation, income, education, food access, social support, and access to healthcare.

System-Level Barriers: Obstacles embedded within healthcare structures or policies, such as insurance rules, clinic workflows, or staffing limitations, which affect care delivery.

Social Determinants/Drivers of Health Affecting People Living with MS



neighborhood and built environment



socioeconomic status



diet and exercise



education access and quality



psychological well-being



social and community support



healthcare access



race and ethnicity

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The Inaugural
June Harper
Excellence in
MS Nursing
Program



Healthy People 2030—Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

One of the overarching goals of Healthy People 2030, led by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, is to “Create social, physical, and economic environments that promote attaining the full potential for health and well-being for all.” Healthy People 2030 organizes SDOH into the following 5 domains and objectives:

Education Access and Quality

Goal: Increase educational opportunities and help children and adolescents do well in school.

Health Care Access and Quality

Goal: Increase access to comprehensive, high-quality health care services.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Goal: Create neighborhoods and environments that promote health and safety.

Social and Community Context

Goal: Increase social and community support.

Economic Stability

Goal: Help people earn steady incomes that allow them to meet their health needs.



[Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries](#)

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Healthy People 2030: Social Determinants of Health. Available at: <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>. Accessed on February 11, 2026.

Current Literature on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Multiple Sclerosis

[Characterizing the diversity of the multiple sclerosis population in Canada: A scoping review.](#)

[Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the multiple sclerosis community: A call to action.](#)

[Enhancing diversity of clinical trial populations in multiple sclerosis.](#)

[Multiple sclerosis in Black and Hispanic populations: Serving the underserved.](#)

[Navigating challenges and embracing opportunities toward achieving equitable multiple sclerosis care.](#)

[Racial inequities, multiple sclerosis, and implementation of a novel treatment algorithm at the health system level.](#)

[The current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion in multiple sclerosis research, clinical trials, and workforce.](#)



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