

TITLE: Count Me In! How inclusion can help reduce health disparities and work for system change

AUTHORS (FIRST NAME, LAST NAME): Subha Sankaran

INSTITUTIONS (ALL): 1. Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, Toronto, Ontario, ON, Canada.

ABSTRACT BODY: Absolute improvements in health often hide relative disparities faced by marginalized populations. The Ontario Inclusion Learning Network (OILN) is one of the pioneers in Canada to use inclusion as a means of promoting health & addressing health disparities. Based upon the accessible, plain language definition of inclusion as 'the feeling and reality of belonging' developed by the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse (OPC), members of the OILN working in diverse areas - prevention & health promotion, healthy communities, social planning and education - have successfully used inclusion to focus on the determinants of health, and to share & develop strategies for change. Going beyond implicit assumptions of 'we' and 'they', they have posed strategic questions that challenge our thinking and help us tap the potential for greater equity and system change within our daily practice and settings. The OILN is a strong voice urging leadership, bold thinking & inclusive approaches to policy making and planning through government & policy makers who are in positions to reduce health disparities and have impacts upon changing systems.

The session will provide a brief outline of OPC and OILN, highlighting health promotion initiatives, sharing key learnings while posing the conceptual and practical challenges of inclusion work. We hope to interest people working to build capacity for inclusion, community engagement & development, social capital and organizational change - with immigrant and marginalized populations in the context of global migration.