Can Cultural Competency Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities?
A Review and Conceptual Model

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Abstract
This article develops a conceptual model of cultural competency’s potential to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities, using the cultural competency and disparities literature to lay the foundations for the model and inform assessments of its validity. The authors identify nine major cultural competency techniques: interpreter services, recruitment and retention policies, training, coordinating with traditional healers, use of community health workers, culturally competent health promotion, including family/community members, immersion into another culture, and administrative and organizational accommodations. The conceptual model shows how these techniques could theoretically improve the ability of health systems and their clinicians to deliver appropriate services to diverse populations, thereby improving outcomes and reducing disparities. The authors conclude that while there is substantial research evidence to suggest that cultural competency should in fact work, health systems have little evidence about which cultural competency techniques are effective and less evidence on when and how to implement them properly.