

2023 AAVSB

ANNUAL MEETING

& CONFERENCE



KANSAS CITY
09.28 - 09.30

9/29/23

Veterinary Medicine's Role in Achieving Health Equity

Michael J. Blackwell, DVM, MPH

Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS (Ret.)

Director, Program for Pet Health Equity

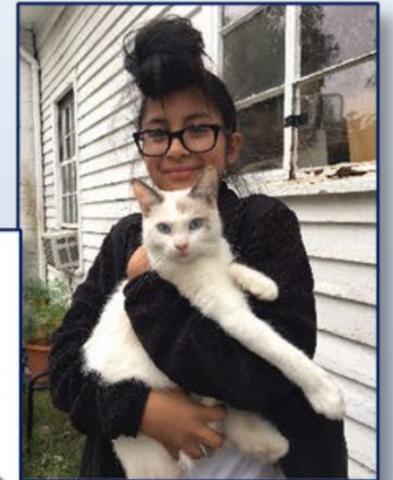
University of Tennessee

ppheweb@utk.edu



“... for the benefit of [a Bonded Family] society ...”

70% of U.S. households have pets (only 40% with children)
95% consider their pet a family member



ARTICLE IN PRESS

Advances in Small Animal Care ■ (2023) ■--■

ADVANCES IN SMALL ANIMAL CARE

Access to Veterinary Care—A National Family Crisis and Case for One Health

Michael J. Blackwell, DVM, MPH*, Augusta O'Reilly, MSSW, LCSW, VSW

College of Social Work, Center for Behavioral Health Research, University of Tennessee, 600 Henley Street Suite 221, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA

Blackwell, M. J., & O'Reilly, A. (2023). Access to Veterinary Care—A National Family Crisis and Case for One Health. *Advances in Small Animal Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yasa.2023.05.003>

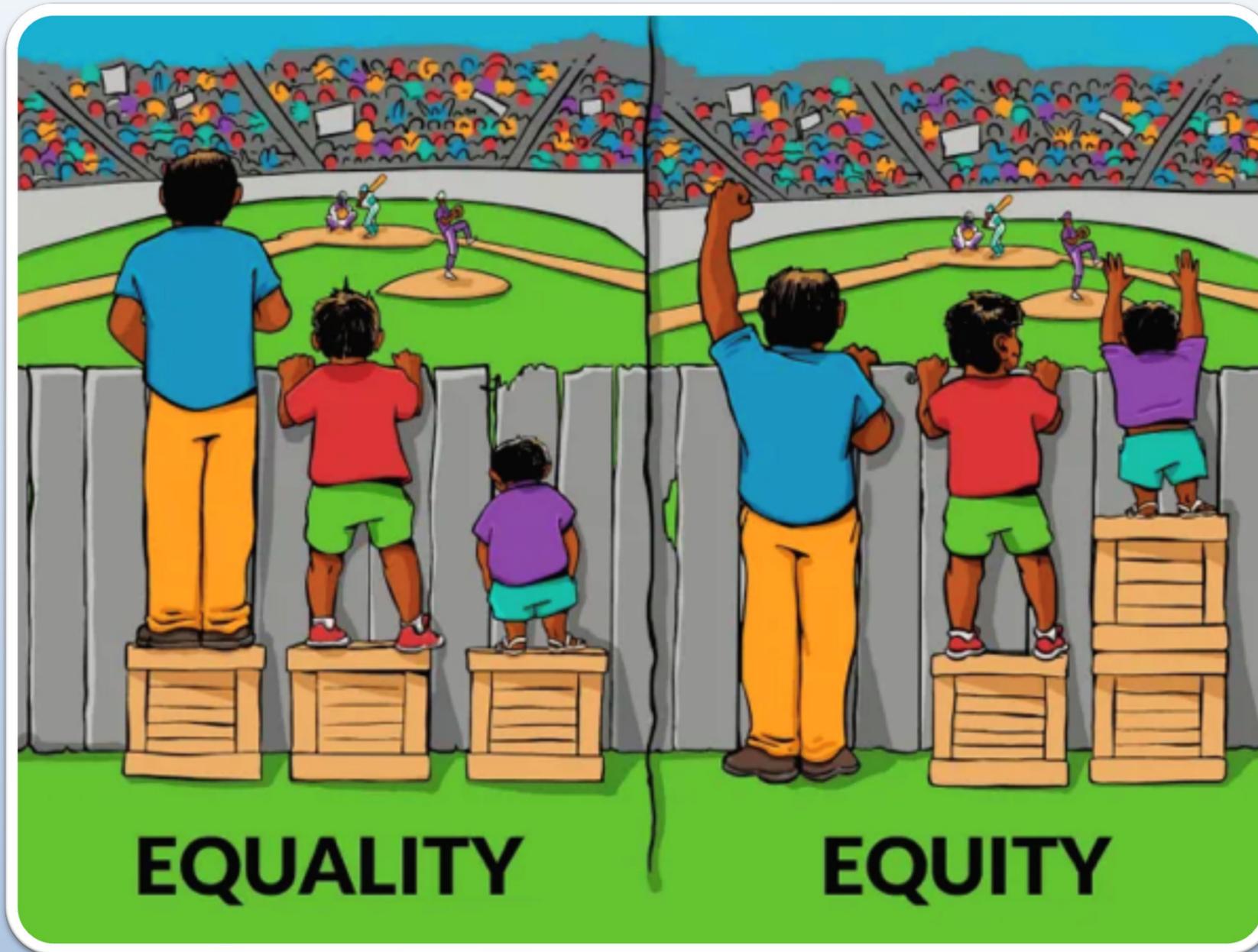
2023 AAVSB

ANNUAL MEETING

& CONFERENCE

KANSAS CITY
09.28 - 09.30

Health Equity



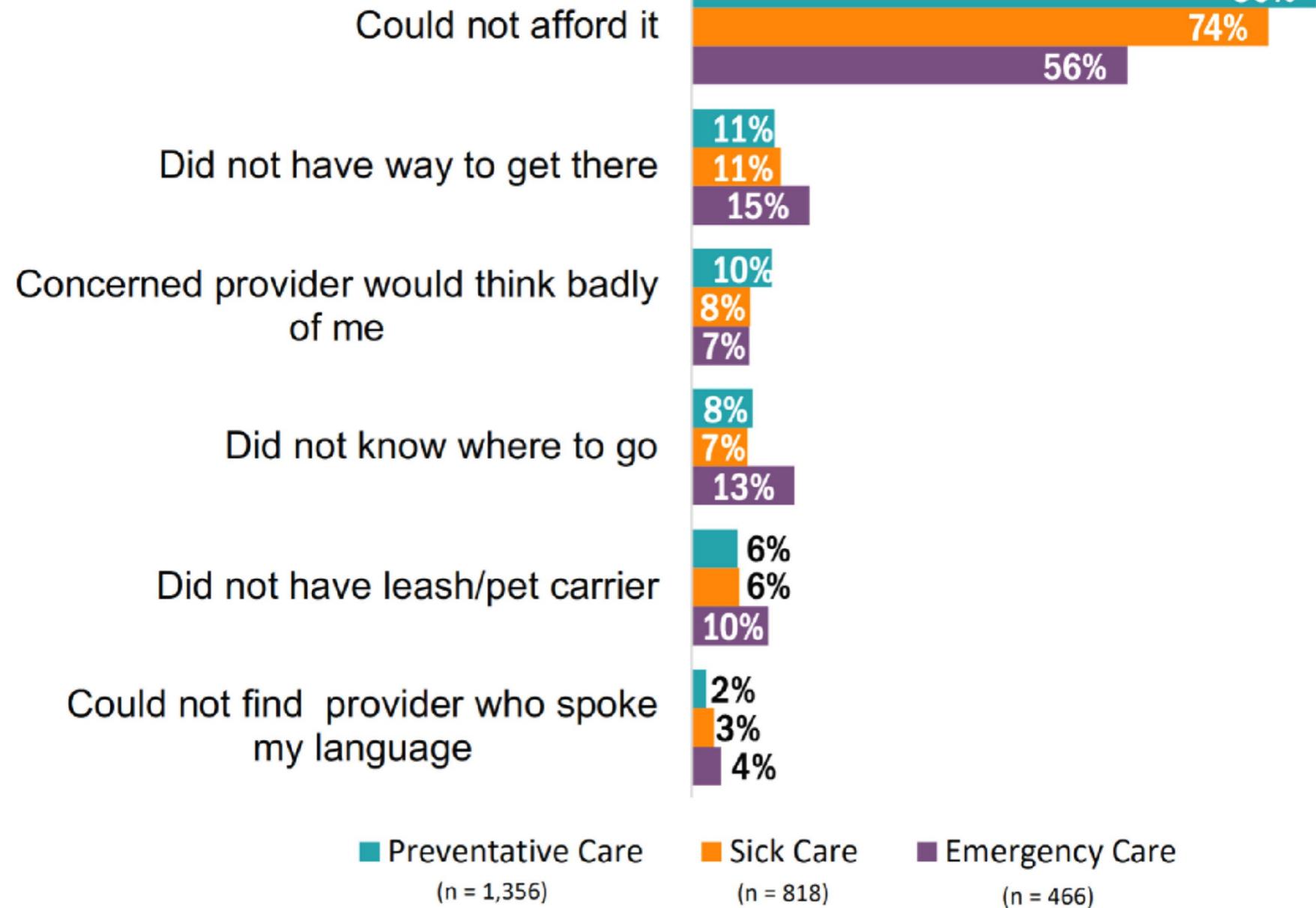
- Fair and just distribution of health resources, opportunities, and outcomes,
- Regardless of socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or geographic location.
- With the goal of eliminating disparities in health and healthcare that are systemic, avoidable, and unjust.



“If you cannot afford
veterinary care,
you should not
have a pet.”

Millions of families struggle to access veterinary care:

- Before COVID-19
 - 28% of pet owners reported a barrier in the past two years
 - ~29 million dogs & cats lived in SNAP households
- Millions more pets in struggling middleclass families.



The Relationship Imparts Health Benefits

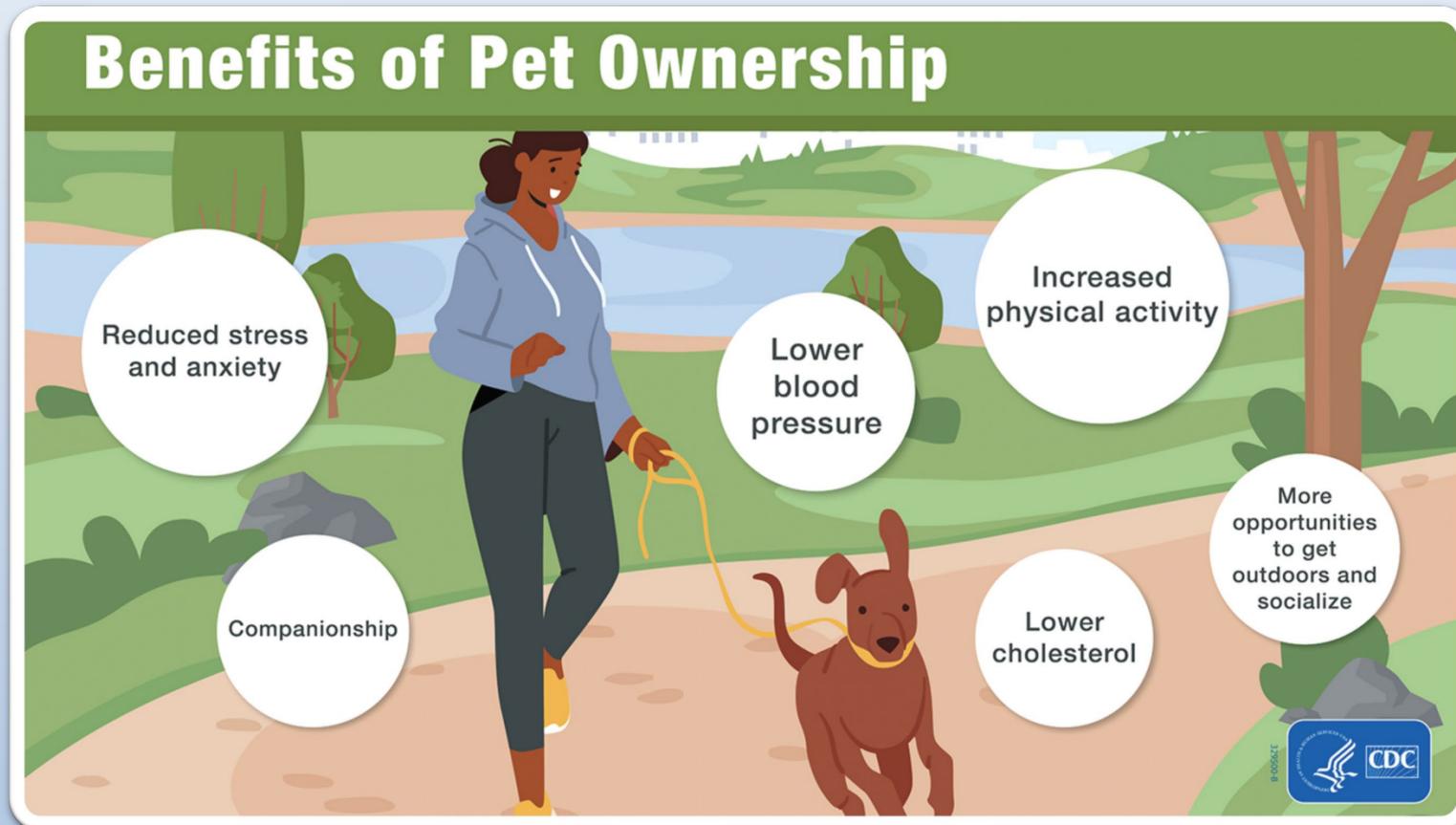


TABLE 1

Benefits of the Human–Animal Bond

Physical

- Increased physical activity
- Decreased physical isolation
- Hypertension management and prevention
- Cardiovascular risk reduction

Emotional

- Joy
- Emotional comfort
- Security
- Companionship
- Decreased social isolation

Data from Wein H, ed. The Power of Pets. News in Health (NIH). March 6, 2018. Accessed January 10, 2023. <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/02/power-pets>.

The Current and Changing Landscape

% of U.S. aggregate household income held by lower-, middle- and upper-income households

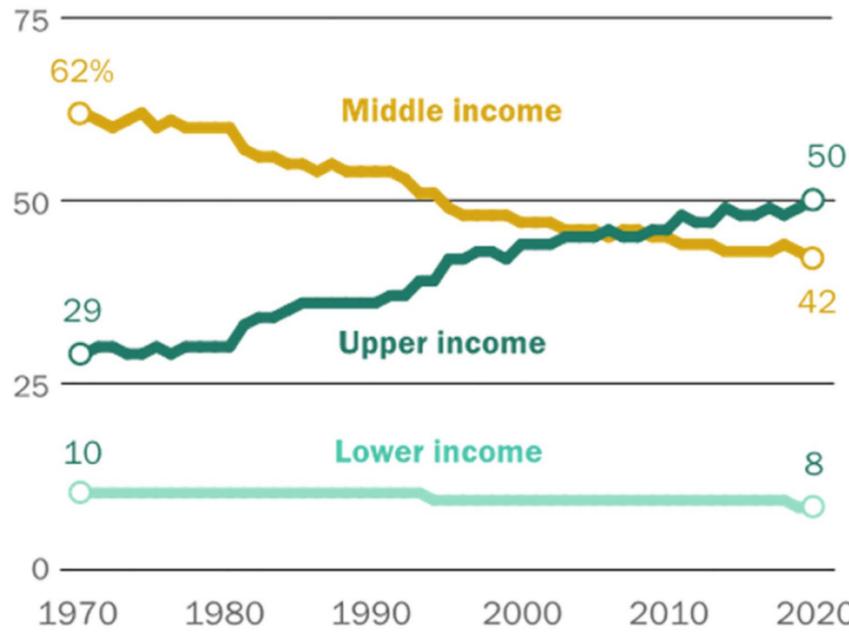
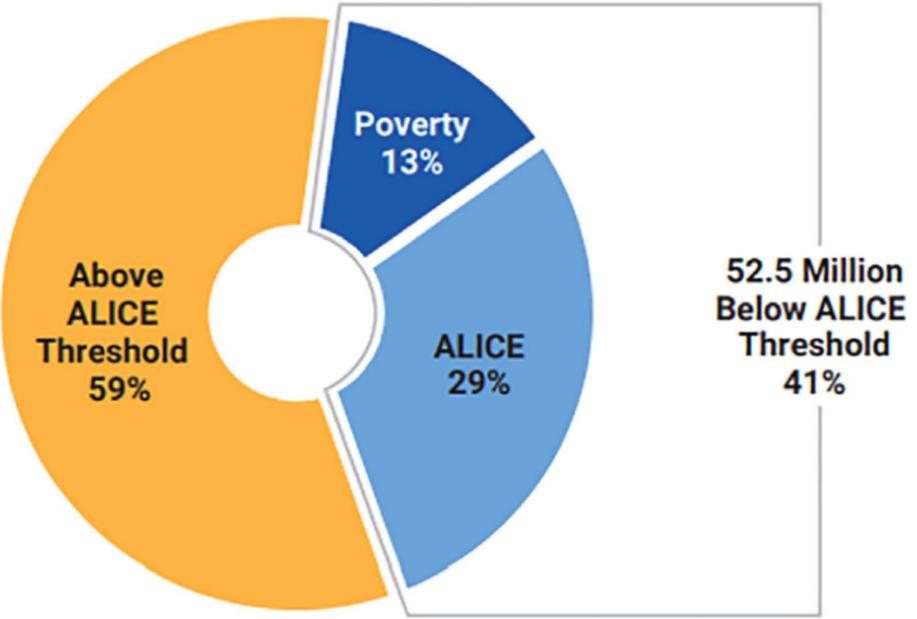
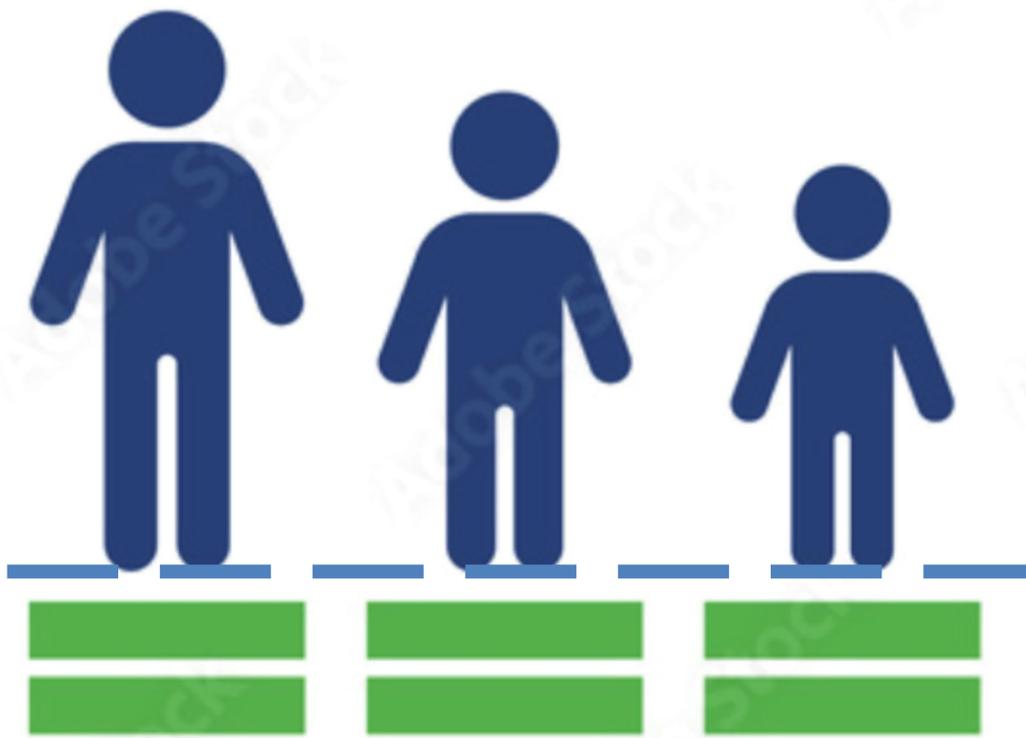


FIG. 2 Share of aggregate income held by US middle class has plunged since 1970. Note: Households are assigned to income tiers based on their size-adjusted income in the calendar year before the survey year. Their unadjusted incomes are then totaled to compute the share of US aggregate household income held by each income tier. Shares may not add to 100% due to rounding. (From Kochhar R, Sechopoulos S. How the American middle class has changed in the past five decades. Pew Research Center. April 20, 2022. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/04/20/how-the-american-middle-class-has-changed-in-the-past-five-decades/>. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the current population survey, annual social and economic supplement (IPUMS).)



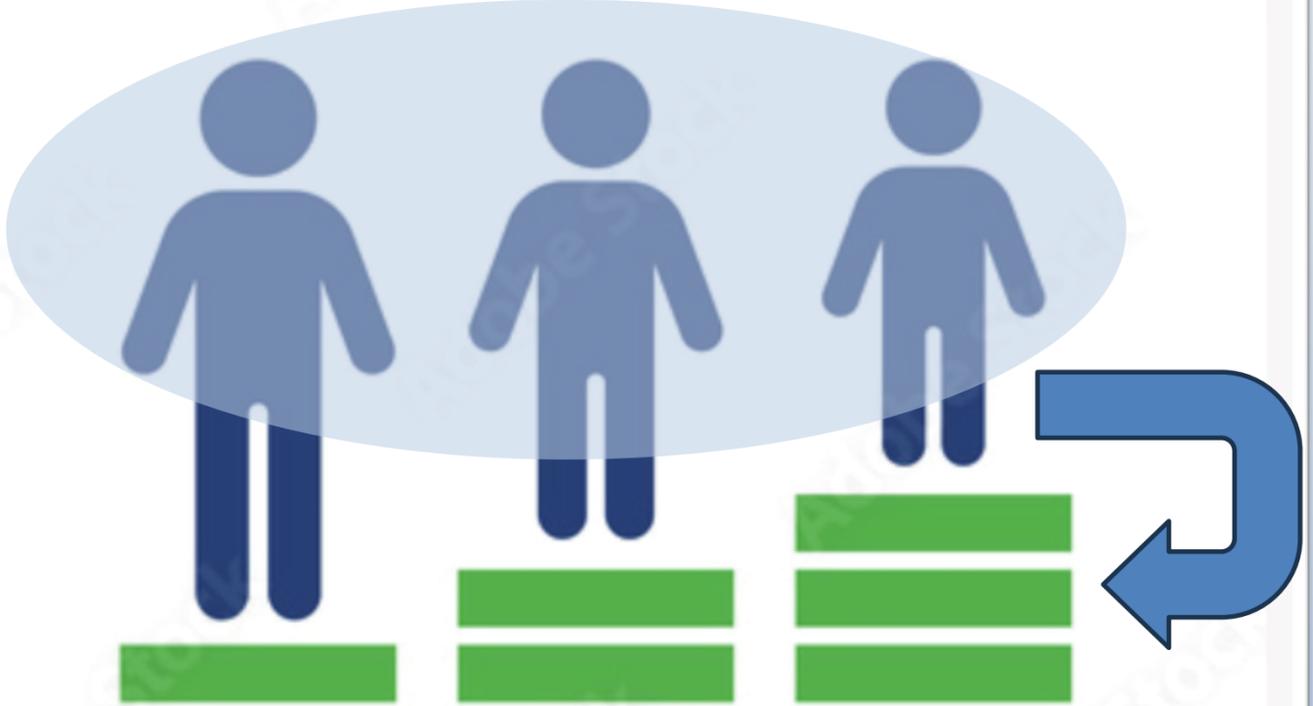
* In the U.S., out of 127 million households, there were 16.2 million (12.8%) in poverty plus 36.3 million (28.6%) that were ALICE, which totals to 52.5 million (41.4%) below the ALICE Threshold and rounds to 41% in this Report.

FIG. 1 Percentage of US Households who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE). (From United for ALICE. *On Uneven Ground - ALICE and Financial Hardship in the U.S.*; 2020:3.)



EQUALITY

VS



EQUITY

Adobe Stock | #539424464



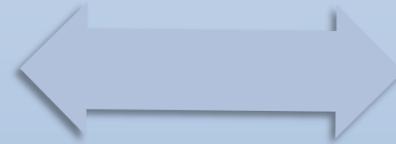
Values

- Protection of the public
- Reliability & accuracy
- Ethics & integrity
- Service excellence
- Active inclusion, participation, & collaboration
- Stewardship of resources

Consumer
Protection



Health
Equity



Public Policy

The Problem with Idealized Medical Care

- There are inequities:
 - Resource distribution
 - Accessibility
 - Affordability
 - Cultural Relevance
- Mental burden on healthcare providers
- Unattainable expectations for healthcare providers in under-resourced settings
- Impact on patient care

Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
Copyright-free

 Healthy People 2030

- The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that affect their overall health and well-being.
- Includes factors like income, education, employment, housing, and access to healthcare.

2023 AAVSB

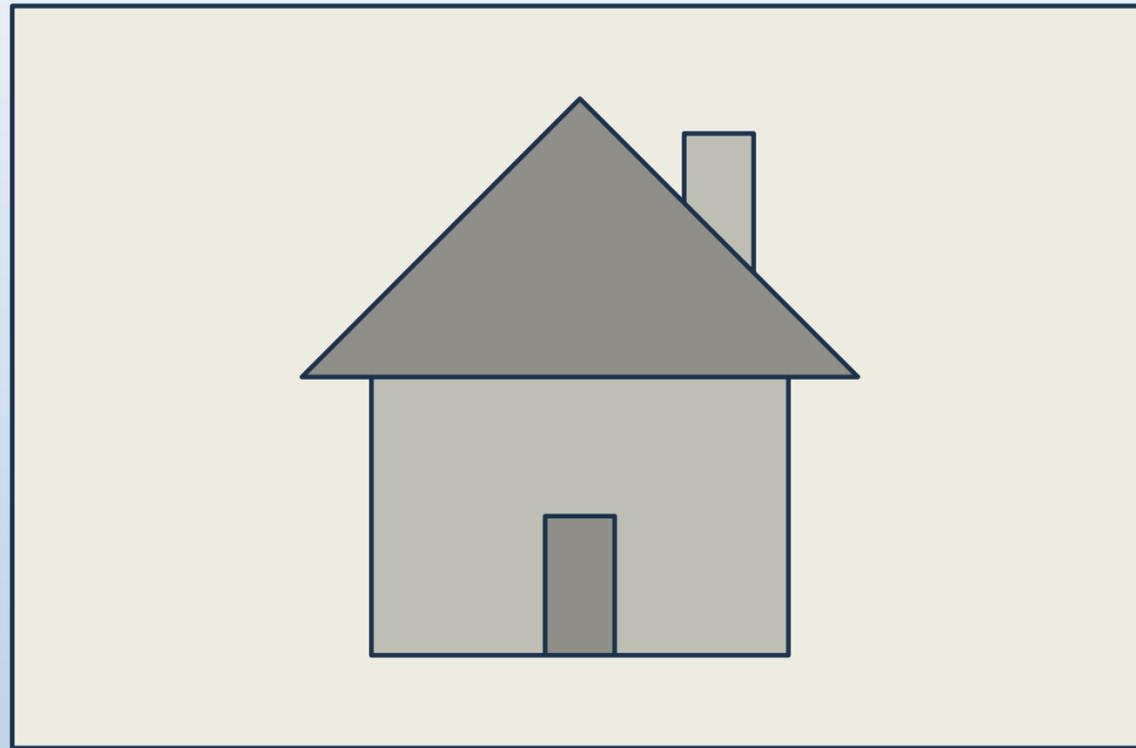
ANNUAL MEETING

& CONFERENCE

KANSAS CITY
09.28 - 09.30



41%
Below
ALICE
Threshold



59%
Above ALICE Threshold

Realistic guidelines can contribute to health equity:

- Contextualized care
- Incremental care
- Spectrum of care
- One Health

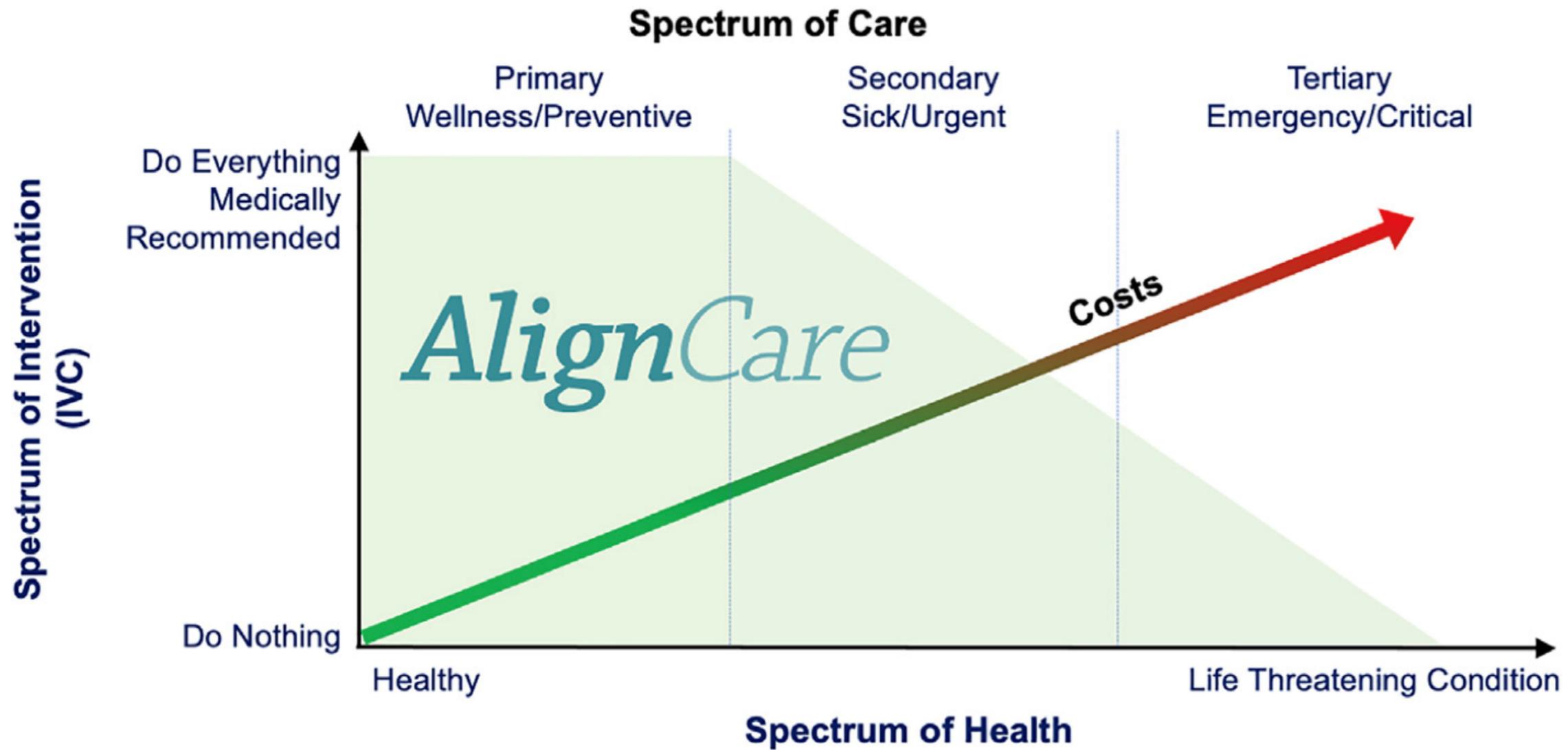


FIG. 6 Correlation of cost and the continuum of SC and IVC. The shaded area is intended to show that as the costs of care increase, fewer families receive care, even with AlignCare assistance.



Benefits of a Realistic Approach

- Better prepared healthcare providers
- Enhanced focus on community-based solutions
- Improved patient outcomes

Case Study

AlignCare

- An example of a One Health system to facilitate access to veterinary care
- Structured subsidized veterinary care
- Third-party payers
- Incremental veterinary care

2023 AAVSB

ANNUAL MEETING

& CONFERENCE

KANSAS CITY
09.28 - 09.30



AlignCare Pilot Study

- 10 communities (3/2020 – 12/2022)
- 993 families
- 22 VSPs (for profit & nonprofit)
- VSWs
 - Grief support
 - Facilitate communication
 - Mental health support



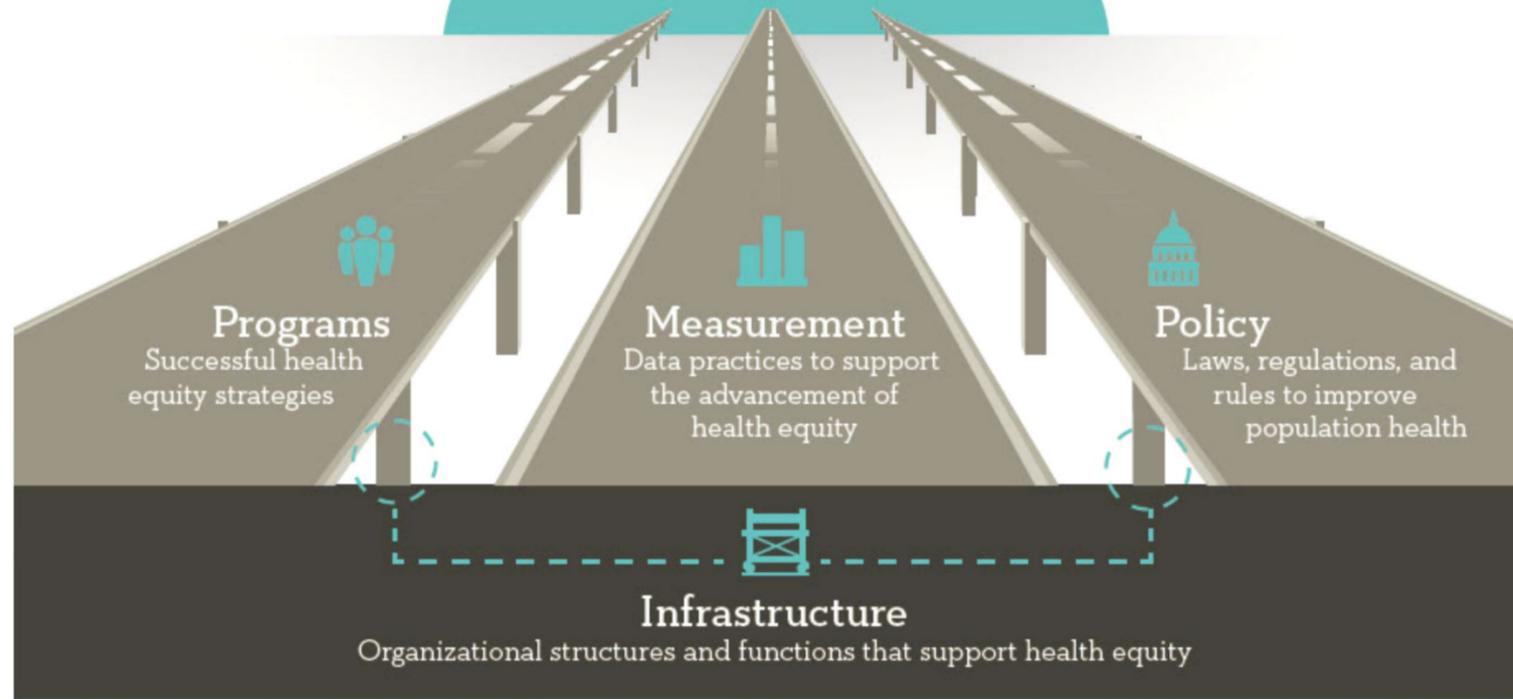
AlignCare Los Angeles

- 4 VSP Partners
- 7 locations
- 3 Social Service Partners
- 11 HSCs
- 486 families (as of 7/12/23)
- 467 pets served
- 1,396 visits



PAVING THE ROAD TO HEALTH EQUITY

Health Equity
is when everyone has the opportunity
to be as healthy as possible



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

CS264557



A One Health System
Delivering Veterinary
Care to All Families

2023 AAVSB

ANNUAL MEETING

& CONFERENCE

KANSAS CITY
09.28 - 09.30



Health disparities exist not because of a lack of knowledge about what needs to be done, but because of a lack of will to apply what we know.

Dr. David Satcher – 16th Surgeon General of the U.S.

