

1 ILLNESS

2 Experiences

A look at how Northern Ontario-based **health inequities** can affect a patient's **illness experience**.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH → HEALTH INEQUITIES

What are Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)?

SDOH are any non-medical factors that can influence health outcomes. Across Northern Ontario, patients can experience resulting health inequities rooted in SDOH like:

- Language(s) spoken
- Geographic Location
- Cultural heritage

Let's take a look at how patients "*Kamal*" from Southern Ontario and "*Laila*" from Northern Ontario might **experience the same illness differently** based on SDOH.

ANGLOPHONE EXPERIENCE



Kamal identifies as an Anglophone and comes to the emergency department (ED) with stomach pain. Upon first interaction with their nurse, they are easily able to articulate the nature of their pain. Their mind is soon thereafter put at ease, as they leave the ED with a simple prescription. Kamal is now **more likely to seek medical help** in the future if they feel unwell after this positive healthcare experience.

FRANCOPHONE EXPERIENCE



Laila is part of the Francophone community. When she enters the ED with stomach pain, she is greeted in English and connected to English-speaking medical staff. Although she can speak English, Laila **feels and experiences pain in French** and finds difficulty articulating her symptoms to her doctor. She ends up spending long hours in the ED as her worry grows while enduring extra diagnostic tests. Laila now associates seeking medical help with anxiety and fear, and is **less likely to return to the hospital** when she feels unwell.

URBAN EXPERIENCE

Months later, Kamal's stomach pain worsens, so they return to the ED as soon as they feel unwell. With it being a large academic hospital, Kamal has access to diverse medical specialists, streamlining the process of their diagnosis. During their hospital stay, they are also **visited daily by family members**, allowing them to partake in group spiritual healing practices necessary to maintain their overall holistic wellbeing.



RURAL EXPERIENCE



Although Laila feels her stomach pain worsen months later, she doesn't return to the ED until the pain becomes unbearable, trying to avoid the anxiety and stress she now associates with seeking healthcare support. Her illness has now become too complex to care for at her local hospital, so she is flown to the nearest urban centre. She spends **weeks here alone**, as the **financial burden** of traveling to the city is too much for her family to bear.

313 is the minimum number of physicians in demand within Northern Ontario communities as of 2021*. Elevating linguistic and culturally sensitive care is crucial to the health and wellbeing of Northern Ontarians.