



Dr. Enrico Castillo is a public psychiatrist, a health services/health policy researcher, and an associate residency program director with a dual affiliation with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences. He served as co-chair of the DGSOM COVID-19 Health Equity Research and Advisory Committee and is a nationally recognized leader in mental health services and policies to address homelessness among individuals with serious mental illness.

DR. ENRICO CASTILLO

HEALTHCARE AS A POLITICAL ACT

What are pressing issues in your line of work that healthcare professionals should focus on?

"It is critical that healthcare takes a strong look at its values and where those values come from. For a long time, physicians have held this stance that they want to be objective and apolitical, but what is coming into greater focus now as a community, is that healthcare and also medical education are inherently political acts. By political, I don't mean Democratic or Republican, but I mean that everything we do involves power, ideology, and the organization of people."

USING POSITIONALITY TO UNDERSTAND HIS WORK

How did you discover your passion for this field?

"Positionality is important for all of us to pay attention to, to see how it informs our work and our interests, as well as what doors are open and closed to us. Being raised in rural Virginia as a 2nd generation Filipino American cis-gender man, my own personal experiences with racism in society, healthcare, and social exclusion informs my work. I've always been focused on care for under-resourced populations or tailoring systems in order to improve outcomes or address disparities. It's an overarching theme of my life, but I've been able to channel it into different areas."

SHIFTING TOWARDS HEALTH EQUITY IN MEDICAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Could you please talk about your work in health equity, translational social science, and mental health?

"I was just funded through the Research Scholars Award to focus on a project to examine and address the jail-to-homelessness pipeline experienced by people with serious mental illness. I also recently published a [piece](#) with Dr. Christina Harris so that all medical research is directed towards health equity. When one does a research project in medicine, it has to go through a scientific review. 'Is it good science?' 'Is it an ethical project? Are you violating people's rights?' But it doesn't go through a review to understand whether it helps or hurts under-resourced communities. Does it help or worsen inequities? That was the focus of our project: giving people a tool that they can use so that all medical research is directed toward health inequity. It is key when training new physicians to consider whether we are training them to understand, address, and end inequities, or are we training them to work within inequitable systems."