

Neutrality, conflict, and structural determinants of health in a Jerusalem emergency department: Promoting structural competency in Israel

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Background

Medical neutrality is a normative arrangement that differentiates a zone of medical treatment disconnected from the field of politics.

Research questions and method

Based on in-depth interviews with staff and patients in a Jerusalem emergency department, this research analyzes:

- How health practitioners understand and negotiate the depoliticized medical realm through their views on medical neutrality.
- How medical staff use non-controversial concepts of culture and behavior to account for differences in the health status of patients from minority and disadvantaged groups, particularly East Jerusalem Arabs.

Findings

The normative demand for neutrality works to exclude discussion of conflict-related, structural-political factors from clinical spaces.

The normative exclusion of politics is a vital but under-appreciated aspect of how political conflict operates as a structural determinant of health.

Engagement

The findings allow us to increase the structural competency of the healthcare personnel in this department and beyond. We successfully trained nurses and nursing students at the Jerusalem College of Technology in structural competency, using the TOLERance Model that challenges the neglect of structural issues that are rooted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

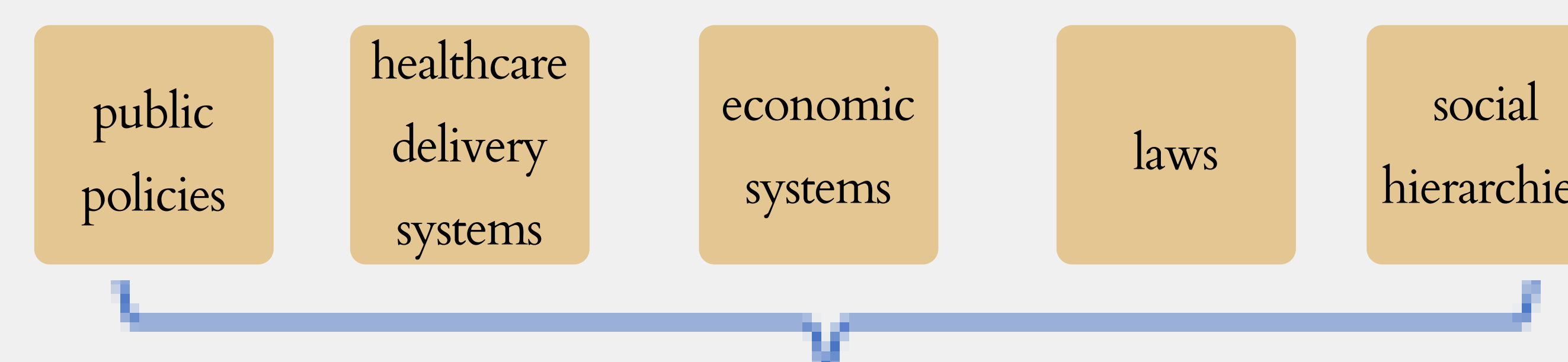
This project encourages staff and students to engage in social advocacy in collaboration with patients, fostering health equity, social justice, and solidarity.

The unique status of East Jerusalem Arabs

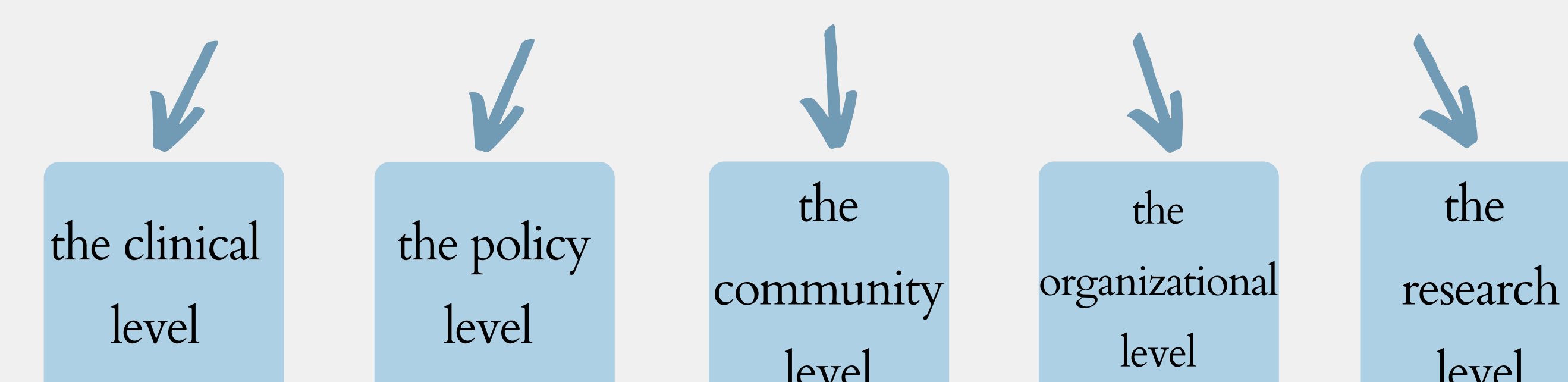
Most are permanent residents.	Only a small number are citizens.
Constitute 38% of Jerusalem's population.	Interact differently with healthcare services.
Entitled to Israeli health insurance and social benefits, as long as they reside or work in Jerusalem.	There is inequity in some aspects of their healthcare.
Have the right to vote in local elections.	Most cannot vote in national elections.

Structural Competency

The ability of healthcare personnel to recognize the effects of structural determinants of health, such as:



and address these determinants at:



Metzl & Hansen, 2014; Neff et al., 2020

The TOLERance Model for Promoting Structural Competency in Nursing

Zvika Orr, PhD; and Shifra Unger, MPH, RN

- Theory
- Observations
- Learning from Patients
- Engagement
- Research