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Local discussions planned on health care crisis

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A four-part PBS documentary series, "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?," planned from 9 to 10 p.m. on four consecutive Thursdays March 27 to April 17, has prompted the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Cleveland County Health Department and the Cleveland County Turning Point Coalition to schedule discussions that seek community input on the causes and potential solutions to socioeconomic and ethnic inequities in health care.

"As health inequality grows, we have begun to see a decline in U.S. life expectancy," said Secretary for Health and State Health Commissioner Dr. Mike Crutcher. "We are seeking public input and discussions from our local communities about ways to improve Oklahoma's health care system and which types of programs or activities would provide the most health improvement for Oklahomans."

The discussions include:

A community forum in Oklahoma City 1:30 p.m. April 15 at Constitution Hall at the University of Central Oklahoma. For more information, call 271-9444, ext. 56535.

A community forum from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. June 9 at the Cleveland County Health Department, 250 12th Ave. NE in Norman. For more information, call 366-3407.

According to a press release released Monday by health department officials;

An estimated 47 million Americans, including about 700,000 Oklahomans, currently lack health care. The PBS series will discuss what makes people ill, and question why economic status, race, and zip codes are more powerful predictors of health status than life expectancy and smoking.

The series also will look at the factors now necessary to improve health, yet beyond individual control, including improvements in land use, transportation, and business investment in poor neighborhoods, as well as safe streets, family leave and wage improvements.

For more information about the community forums, as well as other statewide activities related to the documentary, visit [www.oeta.tv/unnaturalcauses.html](http://www.oeta.tv/unnaturalcauses.html).