

Background

Although vulnerable populations have been a focus in healthcare research for over 50 years little research has been conducted that has explored the link between chronic illness and healthcare inequalities

Aim

To understand the needs, characteristics and situations that perpetuate health inequalities for vulnerable groups and to explore how health inequalities can be improved



Categorical approach based on certain individual intrinsic characteristics

Situational approach as individuals navigate the healthcare system

Methodology

Five mixed methods systematic reviews

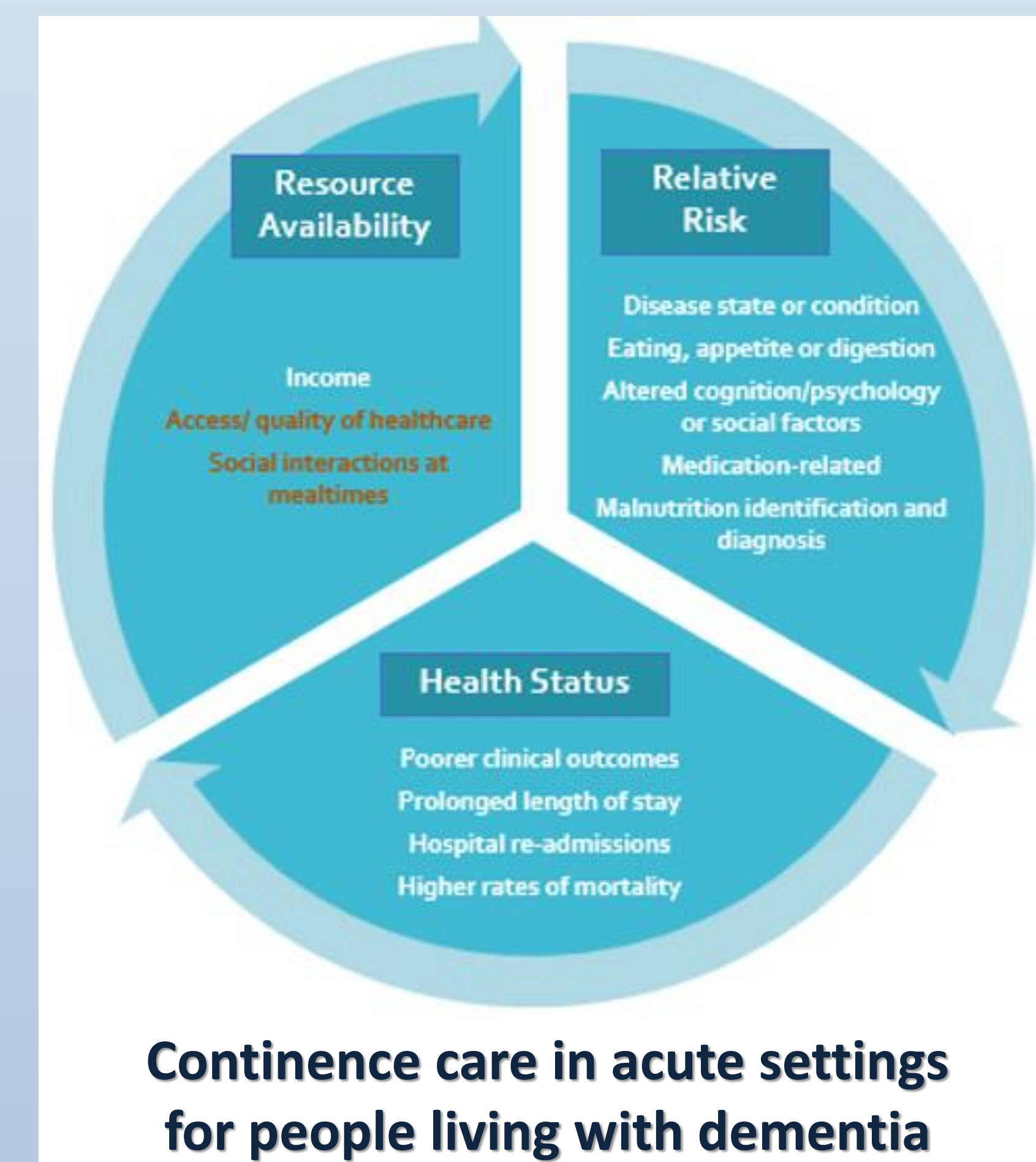
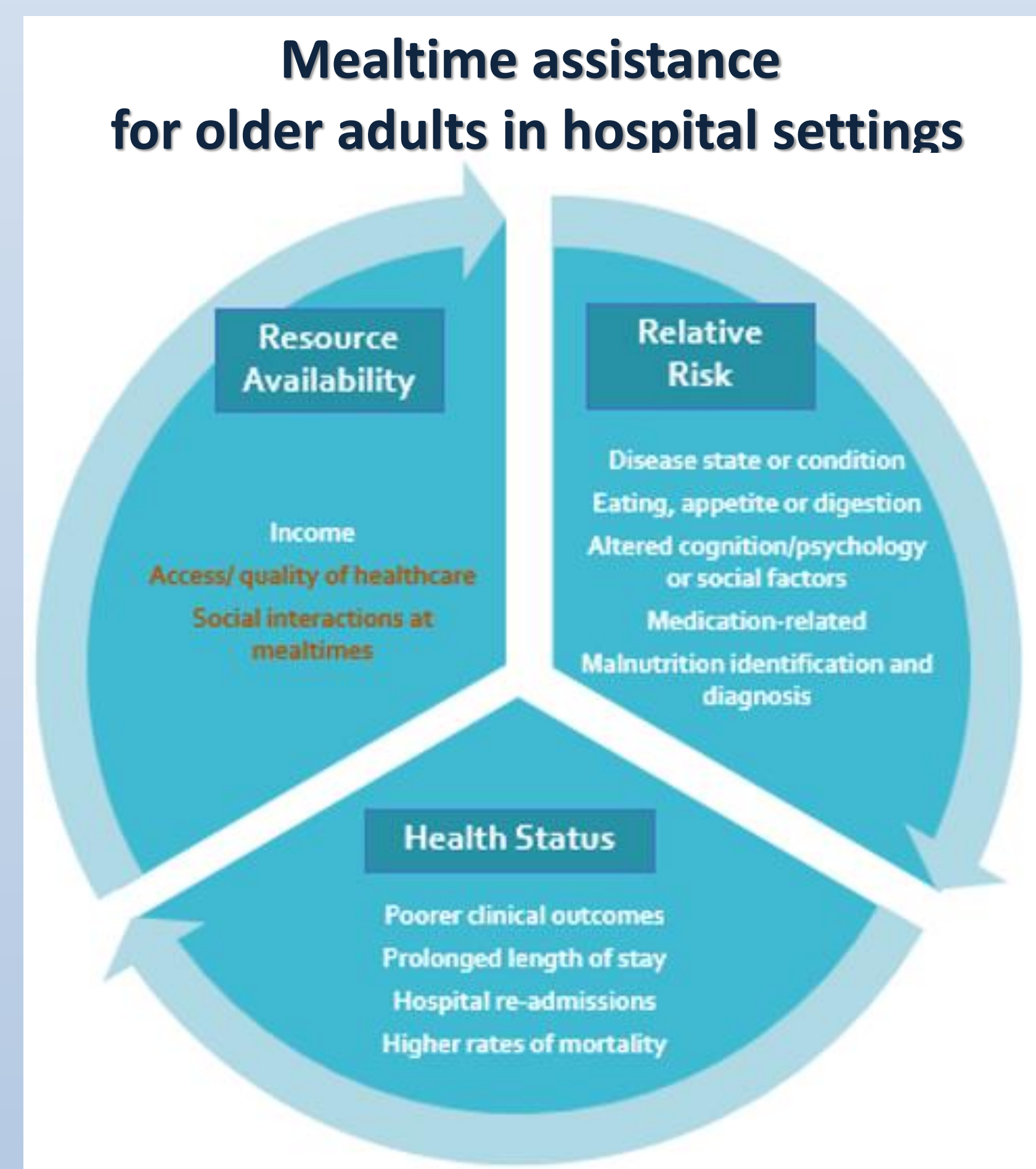
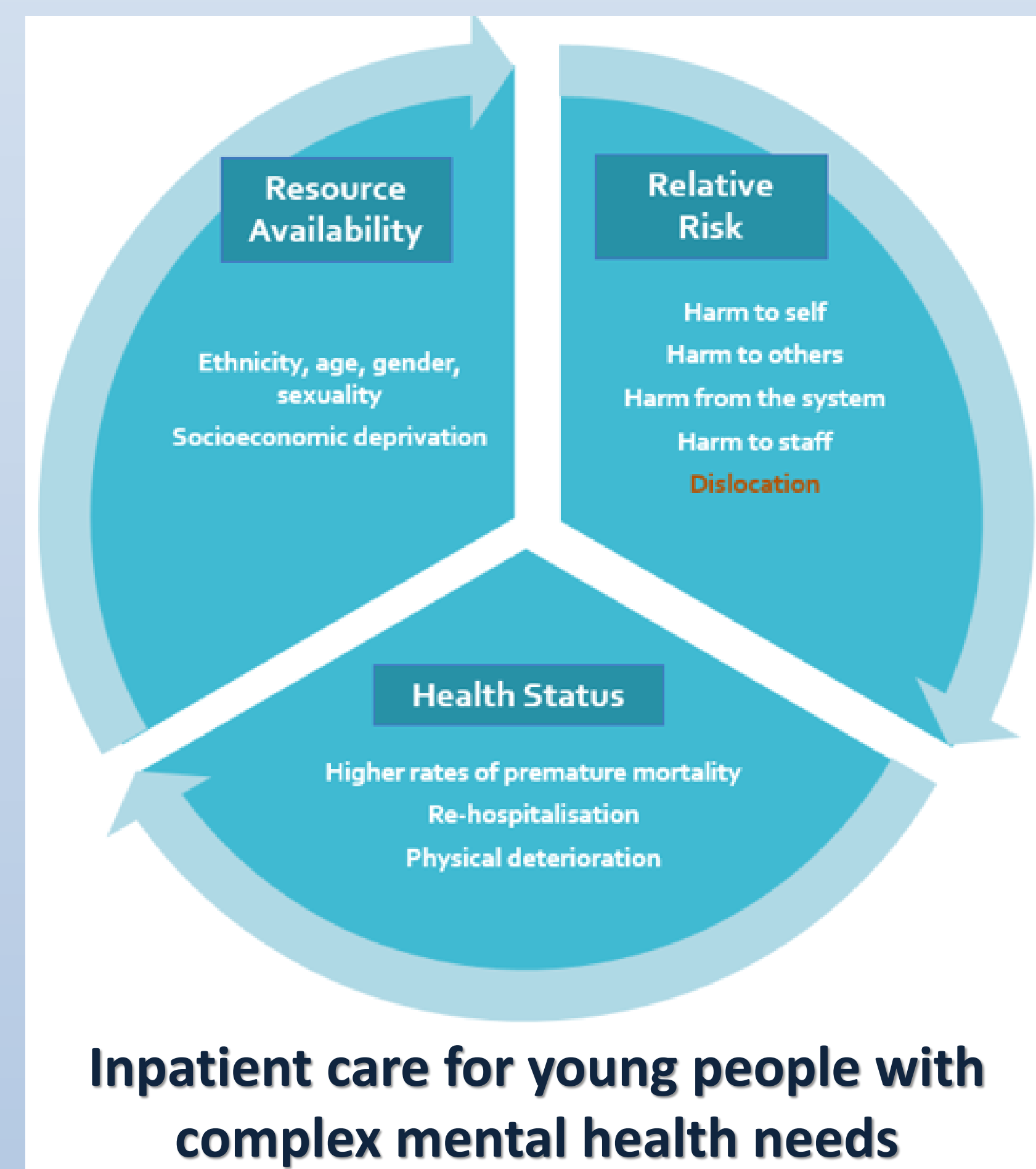
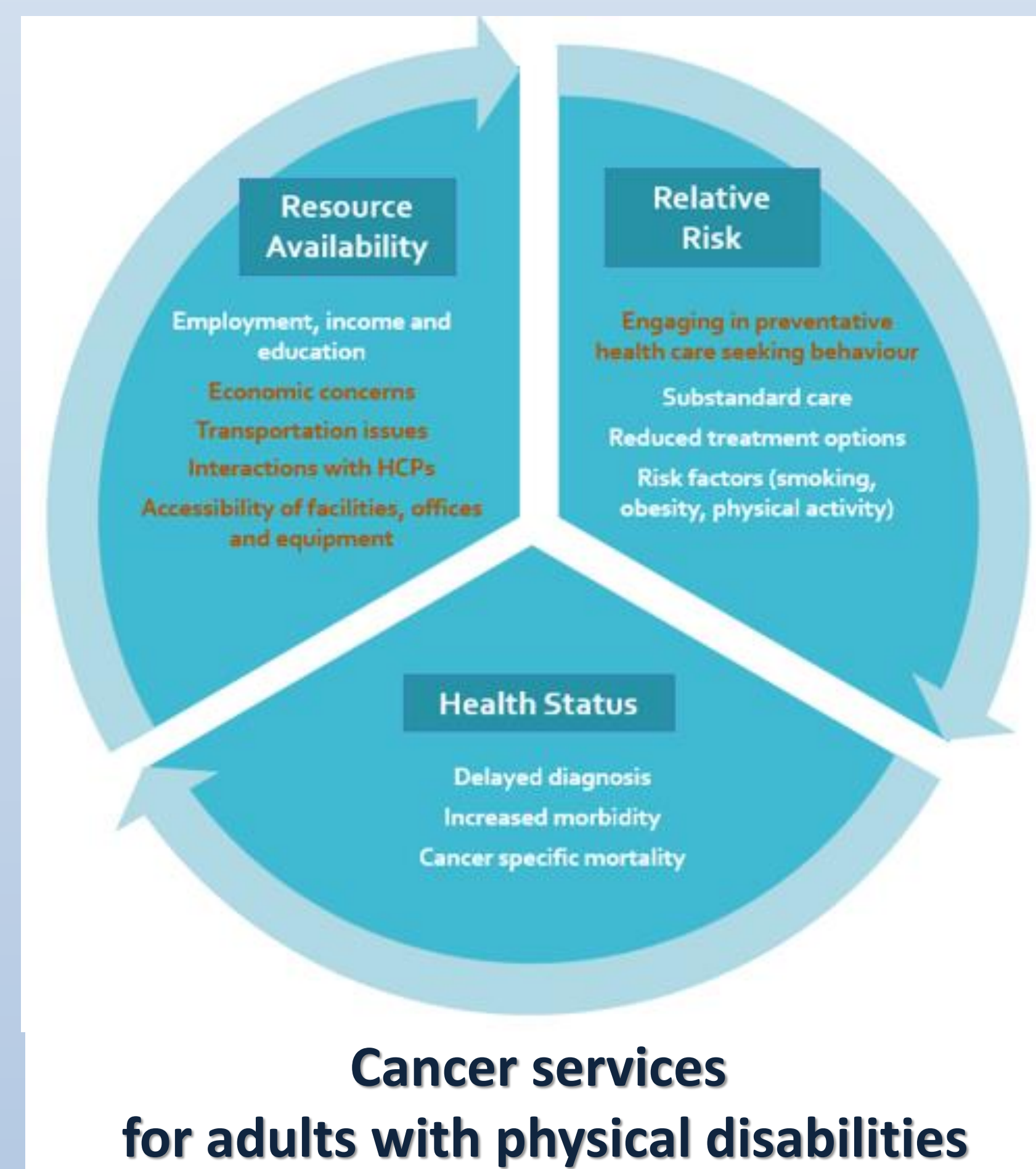
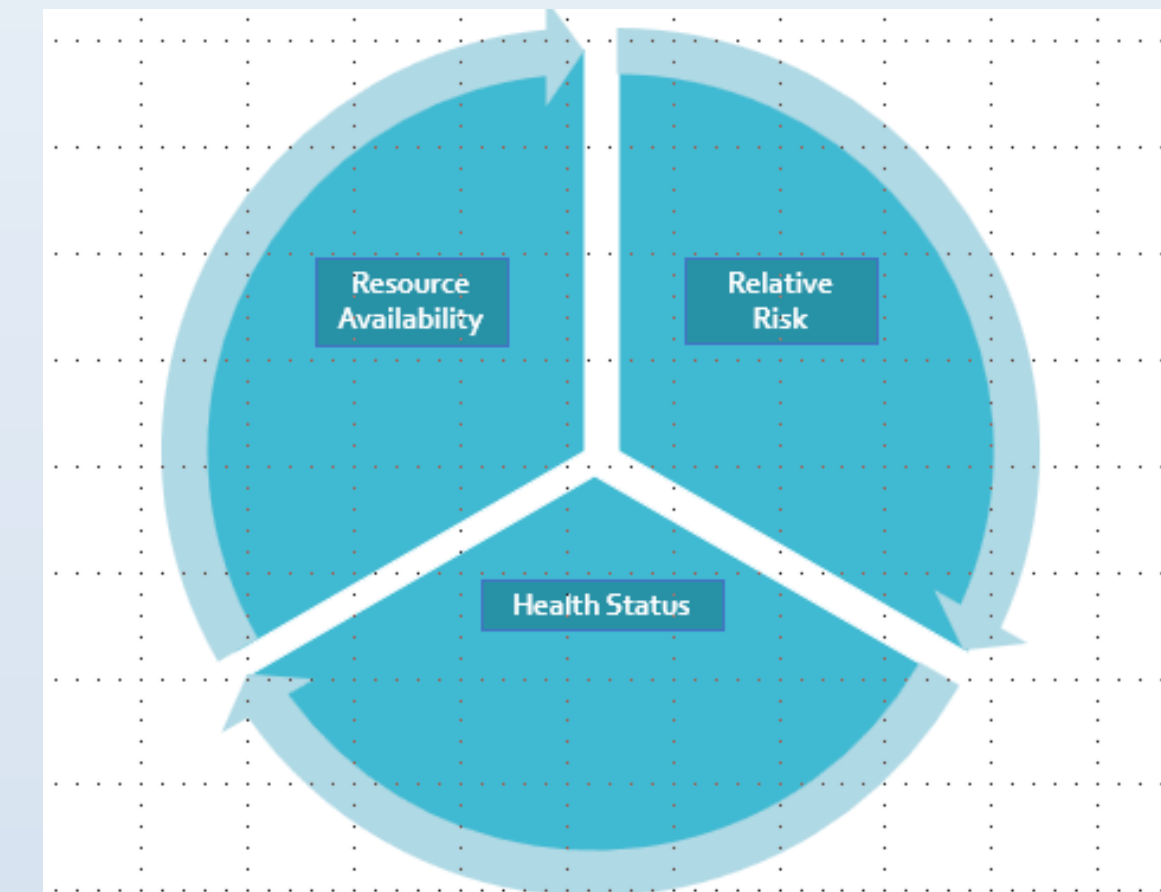


Vulnerable populations conceptual model

The findings from across each of the reviews were brought together and framed using a model of vulnerability

Vulnerable Populations Conceptual Model (VPCM)

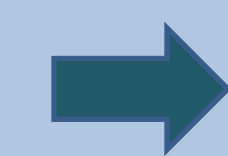
Describes the relationships between the concepts of resource availability, relative risk and health status



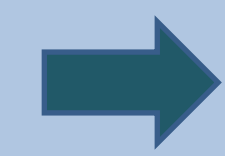
Using this model, a series of figures has been developed that explore the relationships between resource availability, relative risk and health status by placing the findings from each review (text is highlighted in orange) in the context of the existing literature (text is highlighted in white).

Summary

Vulnerable populations can encounter substantial challenges navigating healthcare systems which can lead to delays in diagnosis, higher rates of morbidity and pre-mature mortality



Factors relating to resource availability for vulnerable populations as they navigate the healthcare system were identified



This is of concern as the VPCM proposes that those who lack available resources are at increased risk of negative health outcomes which can then additionally increase societal costs and burden



When caring for potentially vulnerable persons, it is crucial that health care professionals understand the unique challenges involved and that they take measures to improve the quality of their interactions so that equitable care and treatment can be provided