

Impact of Lower Income and Underserved Population on Quality Healthcare



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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO DEFINE AN UNDERSERVED POPULATION OR COMMUNITY:

- By using the “seven-point definition” which considers various categories such as characteristics including race, ethnicity, geography, and health outcomes (Weitz et al., 2001).
- Medically Underserved Areas/Populations can be identified more broadly as having too few primary care providers, increased infant mortality, high poverty and/or a high elderly population (HRSA.gov).

LET'S PUT IT INTO PERSPECTIVE:

- Though the MUA (Medically Underserved Areas) Find data system, it can be determined that over 80 different areas within Michigan can be considered medically underserved (MUAFind.gov).

PICO QUESTION

- What are the challenges individuals seeking healthcare in underserved communities face?

CHALLENGES

FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

- Because of the “difficulty of maintaining eligibility and benefits from government assistance programs” due to income volatility, “many households resorted to payday loans or credit cards to weather financial shocks, resulting in long-term debt” (Basu, 2017, p.1898-1899).

DELAYED CARE

- Due to many “out of pocket costs “ from the lack of treatment from health care providers, untreated conditions have continued to worsen for the underserved leaving them with longer hospital stays (Brunner et al., 2020).

DIET BASED OFF OF FOOD INSECURITY

- Disparities in health care treatment for the underserved can be due to “food insecurity, inadequate or uncertain access to nutritious food as a result of cost, as well as the perceived or real price of fruits and vegetables remains a barrier to increased intake” (Basu et al., 2020, p. 119).

IMPACTS/SIGNIFICANCE

- Low income populations experience delayed access and delivery of healthcare (Okunrintemi et al., 2019).
 - Untreated disease processes will continue to progress until intervention
- Underserved populations are closely associated with low health literacy (Christy et al., 2017).
 - While this population experiences a lower supply it requires a higher demand for health education and healthcare access.
- Novel solutions may require new training, understanding, and access to technology (Connolly & Crosby, 2014).
 - High impact, low cost telehealth delivery methods utilize technology that may not be commonly available to an underserved population.

SOLUTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Healthcare Coverage

- Evidence shows that expanding access to public healthcare insurance reciprocates with low-income adults and has positive effects on their health, accessibility to healthcare, financial strain, and healthcare use as a whole (Berenson et al., 2012).
- Even adults who have insurance through healthcare have reported much is not covered, extending and better quality healthcare coverage is crucial to help lower income and underserved populations attain both treatment and preventative care (Berenson et al., 2012).

Insurance Reform

- Different insurance options including the Affordable Care Act, a Single Payer system, and Universal healthcare are options that would improve affordability of health insurance and make it more accessible to lower income individuals (Blumberg et al., 2019).

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