

The Correlation Between Underserved Communities and Decreased Quality of Life

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PICO Question

Do adults under 45 living in underserved communities having less access to quality health care experience a decreased quality of life?

Intro and Background

- The studies obtained demonstrate that medically underserved communities often times have less access to quality health care.
- The number of people, in America, living in underserved medical communities is more than doubled the amount of people uninsured (Hooker, 2013).
- Rates of comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, and obesity are often higher in these areas. Without quality access to health care, these conditions are often times left untreated (Hooker, 2013).
- People who live in underserved areas are faced with barriers in receiving the same access to quality health care as someone not facing those barriers.

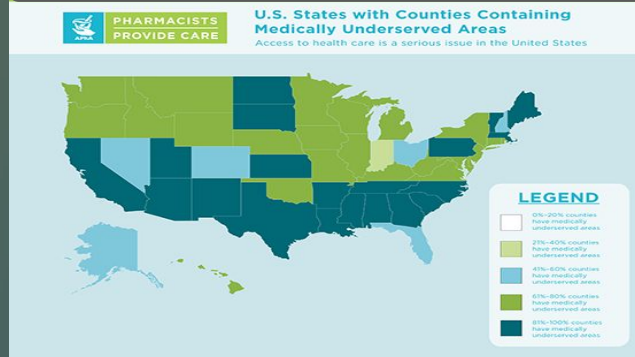
Outcomes

Adults in medically underserved communities experience:

- Increased feelings of vulnerability regarding health
- Increased comorbidities
- Increased mortality rates
- Decreased access to primary care providers
- Decreased quality of life

These outcomes are influenced primarily by geography, the availability of healthcare professionals, and rural culture (Brundisini et al., 2013). Finances and language also have a strong influence on health care accessibility (Young et al., 2019). Individuals living in underserved communities face a variety of challenges regarding medical care, which ultimately lead to a decreased quality of life.

Figure 1: Prevalence of Underserved Communities in the US



Quick Facts

- Approximately 67 million Americans live in federally designated Health Care Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) (Goodfellow et al. 2016)
- Finances, proximity to care, and language are all barriers that contribute to underserved health care areas
- Physicians with little to no debt are much more likely to practice in underserved communities

How adjust the Provider shortage

- In order to improve healthcare access to underserved areas, the provider shortage must be addressed.
- Implementing more scholarship and incentive programs in underserved communities would bring more general practitioners to the area (Goodfellow et al., 2016).
- Increase early and repeated exposure to underserved areas for medical school students (Young et al., 2019).
- Integrate non-physician providers like nurse practitioners and physician assistants (Heller et al., 2017).

Significance

- Shortages of physicians in underserved communities will worsen the quality and accessibility of health care (Young et al., 2019)
- Knowing why we have these shortages in underserved communities can help increase the practitioners in these areas.
- Addressing disparities such as language, proximity and financial barriers will improve overall quality of life and help bridge the gap between underserved areas and their medical communities. (Rosenbaum et al., 2009)

Summary

There are a variety of health discrepancies associated with underserved communities with less access to healthcare. These areas show higher rates of certain diseases such as cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, and obesity which can all contribute to overall quality of life. Proximity to care, health insurance, language, and finances from both residents of underserved areas as well as practicing providers are some of the major factors contributing to these disparities.

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