HEALTHCARE UTILIZATION, BARRIERS, AND NEEDS OF A LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY IN SAN JOSE, CA

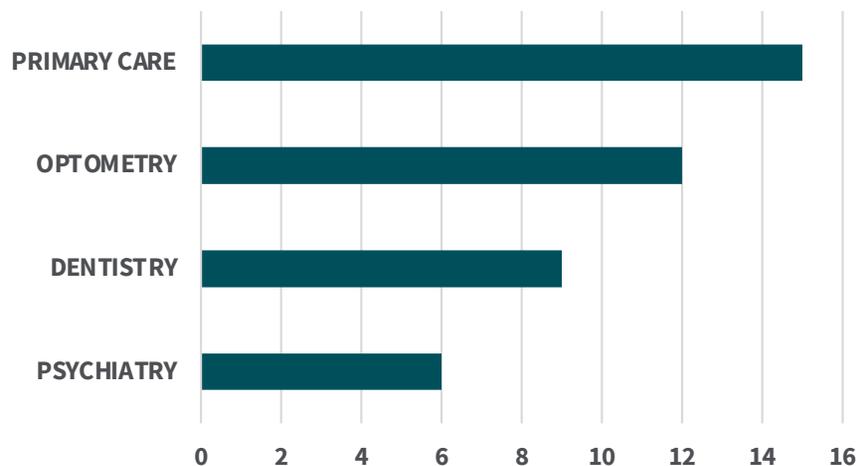Shannon Byrnes, BS, PA-S; Michele Toussaint, MS, PA-C

BACKGROUND

Poor access and utilization of medical care in low-income communities is a large contributor to worse health outcomes for these populations. Strategies to mitigate this disparity must be multifaceted and informed by community-specific needs.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Santa Maria Urban Ministry is a non-profit organization that supports ~600 low-income individuals and families out of downtown San Jose, California. Their program areas including a daily food pantry, clothing and hygiene kits, tax preparation services, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and after school tutoring

SERVICES OF HIGHEST NEED

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This pilot study sought to identify the prevalent healthcare needs, barriers, and utilization patterns of a low-income community in San Jose, California. Twenty-six adults of low socioeconomic status (SES) completed self-report questionnaires regarding their healthcare use, barriers, and needs. Results were compiled and 2 sample t-tests were conducted accordingly.

OUTCOMES

The most prevalent and severe barrier to care was cost, with a majority (53.8%) indicating that it is "Very hard" to pay for care. Primary care was the service of greatest need (60%).

40.7% of participants had no form of health insurance, and 45.8% endorsed delaying/omitting care in the last year due to cost - both significantly higher than national averages of 8.5% and 8%, respectively. Lack of health insurance was associated with increased likelihood of foregoing care ($p=.045$) and negative past experiences with the healthcare system ($p=.045$).

BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reaffirms that healthcare cost disproportionately and severely affects individuals of low SES. Insurance is an effective solution in easing cost burden, increasing likelihood to seek care, and increased likelihood of positive care experiences. Viable strategies to address barriers to care in San Jose, CA include insurance enrollment assistance, affordable childcare, and improved communication of resources.

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