I. Background

A growing body of published literature is documenting troubling racial and ethnic disparities in access to care, service utilization, quality, and outcomes. Excess mortality and morbidity exist for a variety of health and illness conditions in the African American, Asian/Pacific Islander American, Hispanic American, and Native American populations. While factors such as poverty and socioeconomic status, lack of health insurance, geography, lack of transportation, language barriers, and other environmental factors account in part for these variations, researchers are also beginning to look at the potential impact of prejudice, discrimination, racism, and other "isms" (e.g., ageism, sexism, homophobia, ableism).

Major federal initiatives such as Healthy People 2010, the Race and Health Initiative, and the CDC REACH Program, and state initiatives such as Healthy New Jersey 2010 are designed to hopefully reduce and eliminate these health disparities. Primary care/health services researchers need to learn more about the methodological and societal complexities of studying race/ethnicity and racism as critical variables in health care.

II. Aim

In this 3-part workshop, Fellows will be introduced to the subject of racial and ethnic health disparities, and will explore methodological challenges in studying race/ethnicity and racism in health care.
III. Learning Objectives

Part 1: Studying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care

- Discuss selected findings from the literature about existing racial and ethnic disparities in health care access, service utilization, and outcomes
- Discuss some of the racial, ethnic, and sociocultural factors that can influence physician decision-making; and
- Describe the impact and role of the media in reporting (and misreporting) research-related information to the public

Parts 2 and 3: Experiences of Using Administrative Data to Study Race/Ethnicity and Health Insurance-Related Differences in Adverse Outcomes for Pediatric Patients

- Understand the process the presenter went through in conducting the research project from initiation to completion
- Understand the challenges experienced in using administrative data for the study
- Discuss race/ethnicity and insurance-related difference in adverse outcomes for pediatric patients hospitalized for asthma
- Discuss race/ethnicity and insurance-related differences in the provision of intensive care services for pediatric patients hospitalized for asthma

IV. Teaching Method(s)

Three 1.5 hour seminars will be presented. Directed readings, a video/journal club, didactic lectures, and small group discussions will be employed.

V. Content Outline

Part 1: Studying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care

Fellows will review and critique the Schulman et al. New England Journal of Medicine article*, and subsequent Letters to the Editor** that challenged the interpretation of the results (see below). They will also see the ABC Nightline Video (N990224-01) - "America in Black and White. Health Care, The Great Divide" that appeared following the publication of the article. The role of the print and broadcast media in reporting research results will also be discussed.

Parts 2 and 3: Experiences of Using Administrative Data to Study Race/Ethnicity and Health Insurance-Related Differences in Adverse Outcomes for Pediatric Patients

Fellows will learn about some of the methodological challenges in studying race and ethnicity in health care using large administrative/medical claims databases.

VI. Application to Actual Research Projects by Fellows

Dr. Sajidah Husain, one of the NRSA Fellows, presented findings from her asthma research project (see Parts 2 and 3 above). Fellows will have an opportunity to discuss issues related to the study of race and ethnicity at follow-up Research Forum meetings.
VII. References/Internet Resources

Workshop Readings


Additional Readings and Resources


Jones CP. "Naming Racism," Research in Diverse Communities: Towards the Elimination of Disparities (Keynote), Monday June 18th, 3:00 p.m. ET, 2001 Summer Public Health Research Videoconference on Minority Health, University of North Carolina http://www.kff.org


LaVeist TA, Nickerson K, Bowie JV. "Attitudes about Racism, Medical Mistrust, and Satisfaction with Care among African American and White Cardiac Patients," Medical Care Research and Review Volume 57, Supplement 1, 2000, pp. 146-161.


