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Determinants of Dental Care Utilization, Unmet Dental Care Need, and Barriers among Women of Reproductive Age in the United States

Abstract:

Introduction: Dental care is integral to general health but is often isolated from the health-care system and not discussed as part of overall health. The barriers to accessing needed dental care vary among socioeconomic and demographic groups. This study examined the disparities in dental care access and identified the socioeconomic and demographic factors associated with dental health needs among United States women.

Methods: Using data from the 2017-2020 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES), we conducted a Chi-square to assess the differences in the proportions of women who reported not getting their needed dental care and computed a weighted multivariate logistic regression to examine the factors associated with access to dental care use, unmet dental-care need, and reported reasons for unmet need.

Results: Race, income, and education played a significant role in surveyed participants regarding dental care use and unmet dental care needs. Non-Hispanic Blacks and other minority racial-ethnic groups, including multi-racial groups, were likelier to have never used dental care than non-Hispanic Whites. Furthermore, non-Hispanic Whites with less than a high school education were likelier to have never used dental care than those with a high school education. Groups more likely to report an unmet need were women with PIR < 1.00. Moreover, between 1.00 and 1.99 compared to PIR ≥ 2.00 and women without health insurance compared to those with health insurance.

Conclusion: Expanding insurance coverage for dental care and improving access for women with poor health may improve racial-ethnic and education-level disparities, specifically in African American women's unmet dental care needs.

Biography

Fatima M. Mncube-Barnes, Ed.D, MPH, MBA, is an expert in knowledge management, instructional design, and health informatics. With degrees from Harvard, Brown, and other prestigious institutions, she excels in digital library operations, program development, and research informatics. She has led significant process improvements and team-building initiatives, achieving substantial cost savings and advancements in technology integration.