

Strategies to Reduce Mental Health Disparities

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Disparities in Mental Health Care for Racial and Ethnic Minorities

- Minorities have less access to and availability of mental health services
- Minorities are less likely to receive needed mental health services
- Minorities in treatment receive a poorer quality of mental health care
- Minorities are underrepresented in mental health research

Poorer Outcomes in Ethnic Minorities

- Recipients of care at more advanced stages
- Disparities in access
- Type of care
- Distrust of medical establishment
- Communication difficulties
- Specific risk factors

Categories Of Migration

- Voluntary Migration
- Forced Migration
- Legal Immigration
- Illegal Immigration

Immigration and Stress

- Chronic Unemployment/Poverty
- Racial Discrimination
- Lack of Access to Medical Care
- Housing Problems
- High Levels of Crime
- Absence of Networks

Immigrants and Mental Illness

- At risk for developing mental disorders
- At risk for not receiving treatment for them
- Pre-migration (forced), migration and post-migration experiences contribute to risk

Immigrants and Mental Illness

Stressors

- Acculturation pressures
- Financial/employment disadvantages
- Dissonance between traditional/host country's values
- Intergenerational stresses
- Social Isolation
- Loss of and separation from family members

Changes in Major Psychosocial Systems

- Attachment Systems
- Identity/Role Systems
- Existential/Meaning Systems

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

■ Clinical Interventions

- Consideration of multiple health and social service needs of immigrants or other special needs
- Traditional western interventions i.e pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy, but also community approaches and traditional healing
- Mental Status Examination and symptom inventory, but pre and post migration experiences, adjustment must be assessed
- Judicious use of psychotropic medications

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

■ Clinical Interventions

- Primary health care services as main health service infrastructure
- Orientation and training of primary health care workers in mental health skills and services
- Coordination between mental health and general health services, psychosocial and rehabilitation services
- Community based mental health services and focus on early intervention at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of intervention

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

■ Clinical Interventions

- Services should be sensitive to gender, age, cultural issues, and needs of special demographic groups i.e., forced immigrants, refugees and survivors of trauma, torture and sexual abuse
- Sensitivity to different ethnic responses to psychotropic medication- genetic polymorphism, drugs and food interactions
- Goal is to increase level of functionality rather than symptom reduction (chronicity and culture)
- Training community members (outreach and advocacy groups) in identifying signs of torture and trauma in refugees and refer them to appropriate agencies

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

■ Research Interventions

- Elimination of barriers and failure of communication among scientists, service providers, and policy makers
- Formulating or packaging of research and disseminating of data in a manner that translates into new program designs or policy approaches
- Constant review of the research literature to assess implications for programs and policies
- Assessment of effectiveness and cost effectiveness of programs

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

■ Research Interventions

- Collection of data on service utilization, disease prevalence
- Studies of cost, value, and outcomes of clinical programs using evidence based practice
- Design of community surveys versus individual patients and families

Public Policy Impact on Delivery of Mental Health Services

- Impact of policies regarding welfare reform, housing plans, funding for hospitals, and community agencies
- Immigration policies
- Citizenship requirement for eligibility for certain benefits
- Funding of ethnic minority mental health programs (inpatient and outpatient)

Public Policy Impact on Delivery of Mental Health Services

- Allocation of human and financial resources to public hospitals
- Implementation of Mental Health Parity Act
- Possible city or state wide collaboration on development of effective interventions and evaluation of clinical programs
- Federal or international collaborative cross cultural studies to facilitate research on policy studies