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### Introduction

- In Milwaukee, significant differences exist in health markers between African Americans and Caucasians – Oct. 2007 WMJ – infant mortality, STD rate, increase in violent deaths, cigarette smoking, access to health care, teen pregnancy rate, all higher in Milwaukee among minorities
- Wisconsin's 2010 goals: eliminate disparities

### Goals

- To determine what barriers exist to health and healthcare in Milwaukee for a population of minority – primarily African American – people living in urban Milwaukee
- Are patients with a medical home satisfied with their care
- Have they experienced discrimination in the health care system in the past
- Are they comfortable asking questions of their physician

### Proposal

- To host a series of focus groups with minority patients and case managers to discuss barriers to care for themselves and their clients.

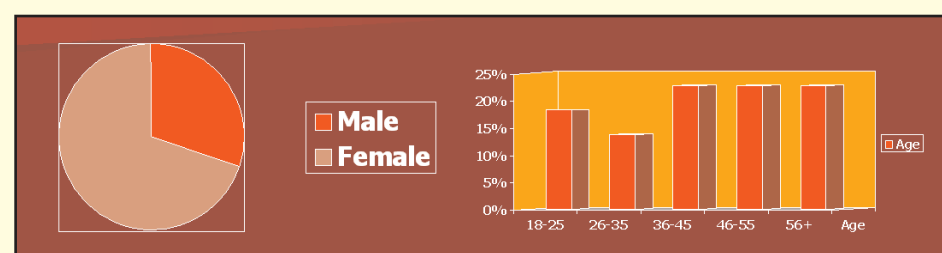
### Methods

- Recruited patients from an inner city family practice clinic in Milwaukee and from the surrounding community
- Used an outside moderator and a research assistant sitting in and taking notes
- Each group was recorded to be transcribed at a later time – Participants were given pseudonyms to use for the recording
- Transcripts were then read by the three authors – Looked for themes independently then compared themes with each other to come to a consensus

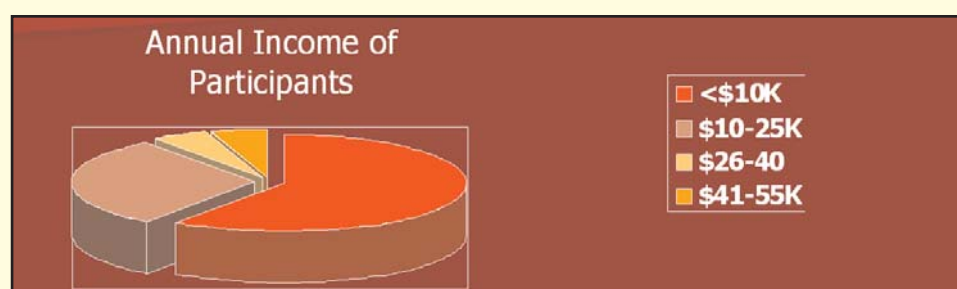
### Demographics

5 focus groups with a total of 25 participants

- 3 groups of patients from a family practice clinic
- 1 group of mentally ill patients
- 1 group of people from the surrounding neighborhood
- 1 group of case managers for mentally ill patients (additional 5 participants)



- 96% African American
- 52% with a chronic illness of some sort
- 78% unemployed



### Focus Group Questions

- What do you feel most affects your health?
- Have you or someone you know ever been treated unfairly by the healthcare system?
- What are the biggest barriers to health care for you and members of your community?
- How well do you think your current doctor responds to your needs?
- Do you feel comfortable asking medical professional questions about your care?
- If you could change one thing about the healthcare system, what would it be?

### Results

Major themes:

- Socioeconomic issues were identified as barriers more than racial issues
- Misunderstanding of how the health care system works and what the difference is between having public and private insurance
- Lack of choices within the health care system
- Often a lack of personal responsibility for health care

What most affects your health . . .

- Family History
- Insurance
- Doctors or the system
- Personal habits (diet, exercise, etc)

*"I don't know where to pinpoint it, either the doctor itself or my insurance company, you know, cus if the doctor can't cover it through my insurance then I never get it"*

Have you (or your clients) ever been treated unfairly . . .

- Insurance changes/coverage
- Wait times
- Case managers noted a difference in availability of appointments for themselves vs. their clients

*"I don't feel like they treated me unfair in any form or fashion as of yet, but the possibility is that it could always occur . . . racism does exist when it comes to serving patients. And not only that, more so that it happens usually is when you don't have insurance"*

What are the biggest barriers . . .

- Insurance/money
- Transportation
- Safe, affordable housing, social/economic struggles (identified by case managers)

*"Our community ain't coming together . . . we not being heard enough."*

Do you feel comfortable asking questions of medical providers . . .

- Clinic patients uniformly said 'yes'
- Women seemed to consistently say 'yes'
- People with less experience in the system seemed to be less comfortable

*"I be scared to ask them cause I figure hey they know their job. And I be scared that they think I'm telling them how to do their job."*

If you could change one thing . . .

- "I think if you in the United States and you a citizen, I don't think you should have to pay for healthcare."

### Conclusions

- Simplifying insurance company's methods would aid understanding and reduce frustrations
- Including transportation costs under covered services
- Addressing social issues first
- Next step may need to be more political than driven by the healthcare system

### Future Opportunities

- Learning/listening sessions with healthcare workers to explain how to better communicate with insurance companies and with doctors
- Looking at the difference in perceived health between people who have a medical home and those who don't



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