

PROJECT BRIEF

A Qualitative Study of Perceptions of Racism During Prenatal Care in a Sample of African-American Women with Limited Incomes

Background

Early initiation of prenatal care leads to better birth outcomes. In the City of Milwaukee in 2007, only 74% of African American women initiated prenatal care in the first trimester compared to 85% of White women¹. While 86% of White women received adequate prenatal care, only 74% of African American women received adequate prenatal care¹. In 2002, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report “Unequal treatment” that noted disparities in the quality of care received by African Americans². The IOM charges that both covert and overt racism play a large role in these disparities.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the presence and nature of experiences of racial discrimination during prenatal care from the perspectives of African-American women in a low-income Milwaukee neighborhood.

Methods

Using a community-engaged approach, researchers collaborated with leaders of the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee to design a qualitative descriptive study consisting of six focus groups and two individual interviews.

Population

Thirty-one women participated in this study, all of whom identified themselves as African American, age 18 and older, with a child or children age 1 year or younger, and who experienced at least one prenatal care visit prior to delivery of her youngest child.

Progress to Date

Analysis is complete, and the study team is disseminating results through presentations while working on a manuscript for publication in an academic journal.

Timeline

October 2009 – October 2011

Funding Source

Children’s Community Health Plan

Project Partners

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References

¹ WDHS, DPH, BHIP. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) : <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/>

² Smedley, B. D., Stith, A. Y. (2002). Unequal treatment: confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Nalson, A.R. (Eds.) Institute of Medicine.

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