

Health Promotion In Minority Populations

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Introduction

The healthcare sector in the United States has seen advanced improvements in the last few decades, especially after the advent of many new technologies. Consequently, the lives of American citizens have improved significantly. However, not all communities in the country have equal access to medical facilities due to well-documented disparities between different ethnic populations. African Americans reportedly are the most affected citizens of the United States, with many social, economic, and environmental disadvantages.

African Americans were first brought to the United States as slaves during the colonial era. For hundreds of years, they were living in such physical and social conditions that had a very negative impact on their overall health. Even the end of slavery could not lead to sudden improvement and healthful lives because they were still subjected to oppression and systematic discrimination (Noonan et al., 2016). These years of oppression have a very negative influence on the overall health status of the ethnicity while they are still suffering from poor health care conditions. In this regard, the following essay analyses their overall situation, disparities, and barriers to suggest the most effective healthcare improvement model in light of their various cultural practices and beliefs.

Current Health Status

Carratala & Maxwell (2020) have described the health status of different ethnic populations in the United States. According to them, with regard to health insurance, 10.6% of African Americans are uninsured as compared to 5.9% of whites. Similarly, according to the statistics by the “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention”, non-Hispanic whites have relatively higher rates of health coverage in comparison to African Americans. Moreover, according to the “U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health”, more than 80% of African American women are overweight relative to 8.3% of non-Hispanic whites. In 2018, about more African Americans were reportedly suffering from mental health diseases as compared to non-Hispanics, while only 8.7% of them were able to receive the treatment (Carratala & Maxwell, 2020). African Americans also have the highest mortality rate as compared to all other ethnic and racial groups. These statistics describe the overall poor health conditions of African Americans.

According to Noonan et al. (2016), these poor healthcare conditions and health disparities are the results of long-lasting racism in American society. Racism is “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial difference produces an inherent superiority of a particular race” (Noonan et al. 2016). This racism is directly related to housing challenges,

substandard employment, poor education and income facilities, industrial hazards, exposure to toxic materials, lack of access to sufficient healthcare facilities, allergies at home, and many other social, economic and health problems for the African Americans. The specific disparities can be further categorized as poverty, limited access to healthy foods, air pollution and housing challenges (Noonan et al., 2016).

Poverty is strongly related to many other social and health problems as well and has a direct influence on schooling, housing and clothing. African Americans are reportedly the poorest ethnic group in the United States, with a low household income. As a result, they are more prone to develop chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, low birth weight, heart problems, cancer, etc. Physical environmental conditions such as weather, air quality, topography, and vegetation also have a significant influence on people's health. Unfortunately, most African Americans live in poor-quality areas with more pollution.

They also have limited access to supermarkets and pharmacies, worsening their health. The unavailability of clean and healthy foods has a lasting impact on the overall health of the African American community in the country. In addition to having very limited supermarkets, these areas often rank very high in the air pollution index. Such locations have many toxic elements in the air, soil and water, which collectively lead to long-term negative impacts. Moreover, although ACA has extended its coverage plan, many African Americans still cannot avail of it due to its higher cost. Therefore, TAYLOR (2019) highlighted that despite coverage gains, many African Americans are still facing many healthcare challenges, making it very difficult to address the healthcare needs of Americans comprehensively.

Health Promotion

Considering the overall situation of the healthcare sector for African Americans, it can be assessed that health promotion is required on all three levels of disease prevention, i.e., primary, secondary and tertiary. However, primary promotion is much needed because it can help prevent the most common diseases among them and ultimately improve their health status. In this regard, the primary focus should be made on the different factors that lead to their poor health conditions, such as poverty, limited access to healthcare facilities, housing challenges, etc. Creating an action plan to improve their social and economic situations and at least make them comparable with the other ethnic groups can effectively lead to their improved health status as well.

The government policies and the regulations of the related institutions can also play an important role in this regard. These policies have a direct influence on creating a safe and collaborative environment for all citizens by promoting and controlling safe healthcare practices and products. As mentioned by Noonan et al. (2016), this goal of Health People has been set many times in the past but has not been achieved successfully. Resultantly, the greatest health disparity exists between African Americans and other ethnic groups. Therefore, serious actions need to be taken on all levels to ensure the

provision of a safe and healthy environment for African Americans where any kind of factors, whether economic, social or environmental, do not affect their health.

In this regard, enhanced collaboration between all institutions and the healthcare sector is also needed to prevent and treat diseases. The judicial and incarceration systems can further play a leading role by implementing certain principles to eliminate the barriers to the provision of equal healthcare facilities to all citizens alike. Furthermore, with regard to treating the already prominent diseases among African Americans, as stated above, the most advanced practices must be used by the healthcare sector. Considering the cultural beliefs of the community to devise treatment strategies is also an effective way. Spruill et al. (2015) described that African Americans believe in self-management and spiritual treatments; incorporating these factors while communicating with them can improve health outcomes. This can also lead to improved patient-provider communication to build a trusting relationship.

Conclusion

African Americans have the lowest health status in the USA. Many policies have been deployed before to improve their overall health conditions, but none of them have been successful. Therefore, a more concrete action plan is needed to improve this situation by working on all levels. Also, all relevant authorities and healthcare staff need to eradicate all kinds of social and environmental discrimination from society by working together with a common goal and consistent efforts.

References

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