TuSalud

Latinos Face Several Barriers to Health Equity

New findings highlight factors that put Latinos at a health disadvantage.

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Latinos are disproportionately affected by a range of health issues, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease. New findings from the Health Opportunity and Equity (HOPE) Initiative seek to raise awareness about the barriers that prevent equal health opportunities for minorities, including Latinos, the advocacy group Salud America! reports.

The HOPE Initiative tracks data on 27 indicators spanning health outcomes, social and economic factors, community and safety factors, physical environment and access to health care.

The data are used to determine the gaps in opportunity among people of different races as well as how far society needs to move the dial to achieve equity.

When researchers measured health outcomes by race, they found that Latinos had the worst adult health status, reporting the lowest rates of very good or excellent health (34% versus 53% for whites). In addition, Latinos had the second lowest rate of child health status (85% compared to 93% for whites).

Latinos and whites had similar infant mortality rates: 4.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births versus 4.8, respectively. Both groups also had the lowest rates of low birth weight compared with other races.

Among social and economic factors, Latinos fared worse than other racial groups in attaining livable income (45% for Latinos and 69% for whites), post-secondary education (39% for Latinos and 65% for whites) and affordable housing (58% for Latinos versus 74% for whites).

Latinos were also more likely than their white counterparts to live in poverty and in communities plagued by violence. What's more, poverty was determined to be one of the largest contributors to health inequities for Latinos.

As for physical environment, findings showed that Latinos fared better than Black and Indigenous populations but had one of the lowest rates of home ownership (48% versus 73% for whites).

Finally, Latinos and American Indians and Alaska Natives lagged behind other groups in having health insurance, a dedicated health care provider and affordable health care. Latinos had the second lowest rates of health insurance coverage at 78%, compared with 91% of white adults with coverage and the lowest rates of affordable health care, (78% compared with 90% among white adults). Latinos were also was less likely to have a health care provider, compared with whites (64% versus 84%).

These findings highlight the many barriers that prevent Latinos from accessing equal health opportunities. In order to provide health equity for all, changes must be made on the federal, state and local levels, according to Salud America!

“Policies like expanding Medicaid coverage and eliminating barriers to health insurance would allow for better access to health care for Latinos,” wrote the organization, adding, “We also have to take an equitable approach to systematic injustices behind health inequities, especially amid the current COVID-19 pandemic.”

For related coverage, “Black and Latino Communities Face Greater Risk for Dementia Burden” and “People of Color Face Greater Burden, Worse Lung Cancer Outcomes.”

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