

Latinos Treated by Same-Race Physicians Have Better Clinical Outcomes

Latino patients operated on by Latino surgeons had reduced hospital stays and fewer readmissions.

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A new study found improved clinical outcomes for Latinos treated by doctors of a similar race or ethnicity, according to a [University of California, Los Angeles \(UCLA\) news release](#).

Research has shown that when Latino or Black patients are treated by doctors of a similar race or ethnicity, known as patient-clinician concordance, they experience improved communication, better satisfaction, greater adherence to treatment plans and shared decision-making.

For the study, [published in BJM Open](#), UCLA researchers aimed to measure clinical outcomes associated with patient-clinician concordance. The study examined a large dataset of people 65 to 99 years old in California who underwent common surgical procedures, such as hip replacement or hysterectomy, from 2016 to 2019.

Researchers focused on Black and Latino patients because they are “the largest minoritized and marginalized groups traditionally in American health care,” according to first study author Evan Michael Shannon, MD, MPH, an assistant professor of medicine and clinician-investigator at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

Findings showed that when Latino surgeons operated on Latinos, it led to reduced length of stay by about half a day and fewer readmissions to the hospital.

“People question the benefits of diversity, so this paper gives us a little bit of insight that a diverse physician workforce can lead to meaningful outcomes for patients,” Shannon said in the release.

Although Latinos account for almost 18% of the U.S. population, [a 2023 report](#) found that Latinos made up only 6.3% of the physician population. Latinas, specifically, made up a mere 2.4%.

Researchers saw no difference observed for Black patients, which may reflect the low rate of concordance with Black surgeons, according to researchers. Indeed, although Black people make up 13.7% of the population, an estimated 6.1% of general surgeons are Black.

To address this lack of [diverse](#) physicians, medical schools have been trying to recruit Black, Latino and Native American students, all of whom remain disproportionately underrepresented in medicine. (See [“Mississippi Lacks Black Doctors, Even as Lawmakers Increasingly Target Diversity Programs”](#) for more).

“Having diversity is good for patients and not just in improved communication and trust but the most important kind of outcomes, like hospitalizations,” Shannon said.

While diversifying the medical workforce will take time, researchers encourage training in [cultural humility](#), which emphasizes respect, empathy and avoiding assumptions and generalizations.

“Just because you’re the same gender or from the same racial or ethnic group doesn’t mean you have a similar life experience and connection with the patient you’re seeing,” said study coauthor Keith Norris, MD, PhD, executive vice chair of the UCLA Health Department of Medicine’s Office of Community Engagement and Inclusive Excellence. “Treating everybody as an individual and having a level of respect and sensitivity to the patient tends to lead to better outcomes.”

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