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# Physicians of Color More Likely to Care for Medicaid Patients

A new study shows Latino and Black family physicians play a crucial role in providing health care for people in marginalized communities.

October 18, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

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A study by George Washington University researchers found that Latino and Black family physicians are more likely to participate in the Medicaid program and see a higher number of Medicaid patients compared with white and Asian physicians.

Published in Annals of Family Medicine, the study supports previous evidence that minority doctors are more likely to care for and set up a practice in communities of color.

“Our research suggests Black and Latino family medicine doctors play a crucial role in providing health care for people living in marginalized communities,” said lead author Anushree Vichare, a researcher at the Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity at the GW Milken Institute School of Public Health, in a news release. “We must redouble our efforts to increase the number of Black and Latinos going into medical school as well as develop strategies that would help others who are underrepresented in the physician workforce enter the profession and thrive.”

The study linked a nationally representative sample of family physicians with Medicaid claims data to examine the contributions to care of Medicaid populations by physician race and ethnicity.

Communities of color have higher rates of chronic conditions and less access to quality health care. For example, Latino individuals in the United States have high rates of cardiovascular disease risk factors including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, according to the American Heart Association.

Although Latinos account for almost 18% of the U.S. population, a report published last year found that Latinos made up only 6.3% of the physician population. Latinas, specifically, made up a mere 2.4%.

“Building a more diverse and representative health workforce leads to better healthcare for all and is also imperative from a social justice standpoint,” Vichare said. “We, as a society must ensure that individuals underrepresented in medicine are given fair and equal opportunities to pursue medical degrees. It is also essential to foster an inclusive culture within healthcare institutions that values diversity and promotes retention and professional growth of diverse staff.”

In related news, the Department of Education recently awarded Chicago-based Roosevelt University (RU) a $2.8 million grant to expand professional development services and encourage Latino and low-income students to apply to accelerated master’s programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Only 11.6% of medical school applicants identified as Latino in the 2021–2022 application cycle, and only 6.1% of medical school graduates that year were Latino. The program will allow students to apply master’s degree credits toward a Roosevelt University doctoral program and graduate faster and at a lower cost.

To read more, click #Diversity. There, you’ll find headlines such as “Mississippi Lacks Black Doctors, Even as Lawmakers Increasingly Target Diversity Programs,” “Molloy University Awarded $3.5M Grant to Support Minority STEM Students” and “CVS Health Foundation Grant Expands Pharmaceutical Opportunities for South Texas Students.”

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