• Oral health is highly valued by society and is essential to overall health.
  - 37% of low income adults avoid smiling due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.
  - Low income adults are 10 times more likely to rate the overall condition of their mouth and teeth as poor versus high-income adults.
• Cost is cited as the number 1 reason for not visiting the dentist more frequently among those without a visit in the last 12-months. Troubling a dentist is a close second among adults with Medicaid dental benefits.
• Access to dental providers is particularly difficult for patients living in rural areas.

PROJECT GOALS

• Identify dental providers within a 20-mile radius of Barre, MA who are able to accept new adult patients insured through MassHealth.
• Of the providers identified, generate a table outlining reasonable expectations related to wait time to schedule first appointment, general extraction process for uncomplicated teeth, and anxiolytics offered.

METHODS

• Using the MassHealth Dental website for Members, https://masshealth-dental.net/MemberServices/Default.aspx, a list of dental providers and practices was generated based on proximity to the Barre, MA zip code, 01005.
• The list was downloaded and sorted by increasing mileage from 01005. All dental providers and practices was generated based on proximity to the Barre, MA zip code, 01005.
• Of the dental practices accepting new MassHealth patients, there were 559 dental practices and dental providers who were actually accessible to adult patients listed on the MassHealth website.
• Of those, only 101 actually exist within the geographical restrictions and can accept adults insured through MassHealth.
• The 01005 zip code could benefit from more dental clinics.
• There was much variation in the internal processes and restrictions of the zip code.
• Of the dental practices accepting new MassHealth patients, 10 practices offered laughing gas as an option for sedation during visits.
• The closest dental provider that can accept a new MassHealth adult patient is 13.2 miles away from 01005.

RESULTS

• There were 559 dental practices and dental providers who accept MassHealth patients listed as being within a 20-mile radius of the Barre, MA zip code.
• Of those, only 101 actually exist within the geographical specifications and can accept adults insured through MassHealth.
• The 101 identified as still accessible to MassHealth adults included 56 dentists at 39 dental practices, 2 oral surgeons at 2 oral surgeon practices, and 2 dental hygiene clinics.
• The closest dental provider that can accept a new MassHealth adult patient is 13.2 miles away from 01005.

CONCLUSIONS

• There is a mismatch between needed and actual dental access for adult patients insured through MassHealth in the Barre, MA area.
• The MassHealth website contains an outdated list of dental practices and providers and misrepresents the reality of barriers to accessing dental care for their members.
• Even for practices who accept MassHealth, full spectrum dental services may not be available to their members.
• That is to say some practices only offer routine dental care like cleanings to MassHealth patients and cannot provide them with comprehensive care including extractions and root canals.
• The 01005 zip code could benefit from more dental providers who accept MassHealth patients in order to eliminate barriers to accessing care.

PRESENTERS

• Annika Bannon is a medical student from the University of Massachusetts Medical School.
• Stephen Martin is a Family Physician and Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.
• Hugh Silk is a Family Physician and Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

REFERENCES