The Psychological Effects of Mental Healthcare Access for Immigrants

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Agenda

Our Connection

Barriers of Seeking Help

What is a Health Disparity? What is Mental Illness?

Effects on Our Communities

Causes of Mental Illness

Call to Help
Our Connections

We are all children of immigrants.

We live in predominantly immigrant communities.
What is a Health Disparity?

A preventable difference in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.
Mental illnesses are conditions or disturbances in an individual’s emotional thinking, behavior, and/or cognition.
What Causes Immigrants to Experience Mental Illnesses?
Causes

1. Discrimination & Acculturative Stress
2. Immigration Status
3. Risk of Deportation (ICE)
What is Acculturative Stress?

The psychological and physical strain that people experience when they transition to a new culture.

This can occur when the adaptation demands exceed the available resources.
Immigrants may experience discrimination and adaptation difficulties, which could lead to issues in obtaining access to health care, jobs, and housing, among others.
Physiological Effects

- Fatigue
- Chest Pains/High BP
- Increase in Adrenaline and Cortisol
- Immune/Digestive System
- Muscle Aches and Headaches
- Sleep Problems

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Undocumented immigrants face greater scrutiny and stigmatization than documented immigrants in their communities leading to social isolation.

Immigration Status
Undocumented vs Documented (Health Insurance)

Noncitizen Immigrants Are More Likely than Citizens to be Uninsured and Face Barriers to Enrolling in Health Coverage

Uninsured Rates by Immigration Status, 2020

Citizens: 8%
Lawfully Present Immigrants: 26%
Undocumented Immigrants: 42%

Eligibility for Affordable Care Act Health Coverage Among Nonelderly Uninsured by Immigration Status

- Eligible for Medicaid
- Tax Credit Eligible
- In the Coverage Gap
- Ineligible for Financial Assistance
- Ineligible Due to Immigration Status

Citizens:
- Eligible: 29%
- Ineligible: 71%

Lawfully Present Immigrants:
- Eligible: 43%
- Ineligible: 57%

Undocumented Immigrants:
- Eligible: 8%
- Ineligible: 92%

Kaiser Family Foundation
What is ICE?

ICE is supposed to...
dismantle transnational criminal networks that target the American people and threaten our industries, organizations and financial systems.
ICE’s process of examining/deporting immigrants is harmful to immigrants’ mental health and they do not receive adequate healthcare.
What are the Barriers for Immigrants Seeking Mental Help Support?
Barriers

- Complexity in applying for health benefits
- Lack of cultural competence in healthcare workers
- Socioeconomics
Applying for Health Benefits

- Inconsistent eligibility and verification
- Prejudiced legislation
- High costs of reapplication and lack of dedicated support
What is Cultural Competence?

The ability of healthcare systems and providers to provide care that meets the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of patients with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors.
Lack of Cultural Competence of Healthcare Workers

Sociocultural Dislocation: There is a disconnect between their cultural norms and those of the host country. Leading to feelings of isolation and difficulty in adjusting.

Discriminatory Policies: These policies can increase mental health problems and create additional barriers to cultural adaptation.
Impact on Patients

Healthcare for undocumented immigrants
Low-Income Jobs
This presents a barrier in accessing quality services and help.

Insurance coverage
May not include access to mental health services or coverage may only be for serious mental illnesses.

Income inequality
Limits immigrants’ ability to advance in the USA, preventing access to support in the long term.
How This Affects Our Community?

According to The Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA)

- About 1.2 million citizens in Massachusetts are immigrants.
- About 47,000 live in the city of Worcester.
- Greater than 25% of immigrants in Worcester were diagnosed with depression.
Distribution of Immigrants in MA

How many immigrants are there in Massachusetts, and who are they?

There are approximately 1.2 million immigrants in Massachusetts.

About one in every six (17.5%) Massachusetts residents is foreign-born.

The five largest immigrant populations in Massachusetts are from:

- China: 8.4%
- Dominican Republic: 8.2%
- Brazil: 7.6%
- India: 6.8%
- Haiti: 5.9%

Other Countries: 63.9%

Call to Action

- Collaboration with Community Organizations
- Policy Advocacy
- Education and Awareness
THANK YOU!


Pereira, K. (2012, May 24). Barriers to immigrants’ access to health and Human Services Programs. ASPE. https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/barriers-immigrants-access-health-human-services-programs-0