Finding Answers
Disparities Research for Change

A Roadmap and Best Practices for Organizations to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care

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Background:

Five systematic reviews examined interventions to improve minority health and potentially reduce disparities in asthma, HIV, colorectal cancer, prostate cancer and cervical cancer. The five reviews focused on interventions that occur in or have a sustained link to a health care delivery setting, examined racial and ethnic disparities in care and improvements in minority health, rather than geographic, socioeconomic, or other disparities. Based on these reviews, evaluating promising practices, and providing technical assistance to health care organizations, Finding Answers presents a roadmap for reducing racial and ethnic disparities in care.

Highlights of Findings:

Authors identified the following cross-cutting themes of the five systematic reviews:
- Promising interventions frequently were multi-factorial, targeting multiple leverage points along a patient's pathway of care.
- Culturally tailored interventions and those that employed a multidisciplinary team of care providers tended to be effective.
- Education interventions using interactive methods to deliver skills training were more effective than traditional, didactic approaches in which the patient was a passive learner.

Patient navigation and interventions that actively involved family and community members in patient care showed promise for improving minority health outcomes.

Conclusions:

The authors anticipate that the roadmap and best practices will be useful for organizations, policy-makers and researchers striving to provide high-quality, equitable care. While more disparities intervention research is needed, research shows which approaches are likely to succeed.

Roadmap for organizations seeking to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care:

1) Recognize disparities and commit to reducing them.
2) Implement a basic quality improvement structure and process.
3) Make equity an integral component of quality improvement efforts.
4) Design the intervention(s).
5) Implement, evaluate and adjust the intervention(s).
6) Sustain the intervention(s).

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