

CLINICAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS HEALTH VARIATION IN NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT: The demographics of the communities that neuropsychologists serve are rapidly becoming more diverse. I want to focus on clinical approaches to consider in ensuring access to and effective delivery of services for patients from racial, ethnic, and low-income backgrounds. Specifically, I have focused on three central themes: factors affecting service utilization among diverse families, strategies to engage and intervene with diverse low-income families, and the use of varieties of therapies to increase access to neuropsychological health services. There is perhaps no better time for our field to move beyond traditional approaches to clinical care. The work included in this paper provides clear examples for neuropsychologists to follow and integrate into their clinical settings. These approaches provide direction to better serve diverse and low-income families, improve patients and family's neuropsychological health outcomes, and ultimately address disparities in neuropsychological behavioural health.

Implications for Impact Statement

I want to depict evolving trends in how neuropsychologists can serve diverse and low-income families more effectively to address health disparities. Factors affecting service use, approaches to engage families and provide treatment, and strategic use of neuropsychologists to increase access to services are highlighted. Incorporating these approaches across settings has the potential to address service gaps and improve psychological health outcomes for our most vulnerable people.

There is no doubt that the demographics of the patient populations that we serve as neuropsychologists are changing rapidly as we enter this new decade. Urban and rural communities evidence increasing diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status.

Our health care strategies to serve this increasingly diverse demographic are also evolving; however, disparities in health outcomes and health care use persist. There is increased acknowledgment of overt discrimination and implicit bias in health care encounters, and ongoing recognition that tailoring of strategies to access, evaluate, and serve diverse families will be necessary. This research paper of Clinical Practice in Neuropsychology is designed to focus on clinical approaches to address health disparities. The special issue includes papers that focus on three central themes: factors that affect service utilization among families from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; strategies to engage and intervene with diverse youth and families; and use of paraprofessionals such as wellness navigators, family peer advocates, and community health workers to increase access to psychological full health services. There are many factors that influence how and when families, particularly those from diverse backgrounds or with unmet social needs, decide to access care and support for their children. It raises the interesting question of whether a family's unmet health-related social needs (e.g., food security, housing instability) are a factor in parent utilization of psychological and mental health care. Not surprisingly, in the study, patient report of psychiatric symptoms was associated with utilization of mental health services; however, this association was attenuated by parental report of unmet, health-related social needs. These findings suggest that patient with unmet social needs may experience barriers to receiving psychological healthcare because they must focus on addressing the most basic of family needs. Interestingly, use of an on-site food pantry was associated with increased use of psychological health services, suggesting that supporting families in addressing unmet social needs might facilitate receipt of care. Overall, these findings illustrate how it is imperative to consider how patient from families struggling to meet basic social needs can access and receive neuropsychological health care services. I fully believe the work described in this special research paper will be useful in considering the way of neuropsychologists and integrated health practitioners to care for all cancer patients with interact with diverse and low-income patients and families, which remains an important step in addressing disparities in neuropsychological and behavioural health.

