The association of perceived racial discrimination with patients’ healthcare experiences: Choice of measure matters

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Perceived Racial Discrimination

Definition:
» Perception that one has experienced differential and negative treatment because one belongs to a particular race

Associated with:
» Poorer mental health outcomes
» Poorer physical health outcomes
» Negative health behaviors
» Less healthcare utilization
Perceived Racial Discrimination in Healthcare Settings

- Important issue to understand and address
  - May foster patient disengagement
  - Obligation to provide equal care
  - Can be addressed by healthcare systems

- But wide variation in measurement has made it difficult to draw conclusions about its prevalence and impact
Study Aim 1

- Compare the prevalence of perceived racial discrimination in health care across three types of commonly used measures
  - Personal discrimination, single-item
  - Personal discrimination, multi-item
  - General racism
Study Aim 2

- Explore whether each measure of perceived discrimination is associated with patient experiences with the healthcare system
  - Reported problems with care
  - Screening behavior
Study Sample and Recruitment

- 50 African American and 50 White VA patients
- Aged 18 or older
- Diagnosis of diabetes at least 2 years prior to study
- No diagnosis of Alzheimer’s or dementia
- Invited by mail to complete a 30-minute telephone survey
Perceived Discrimination Measures

- Personal discrimination, single-item
- Personal discrimination, multi-item
- General racism
Personal Discrimination, Single-Item

- While getting medical care at the VA or somewhere other than the VA, have you ever experienced discrimination, been prevented from doing something, or been hassled or made to feel inferior because of your race, ethnicity, or color? (Krieger et al. *Soc Sci Med.* 2005;61(7):1576-96)
Personal Discrimination, Multi-Item

- When getting health care, how often have any of the following things happened to you because of your race or color? (Bird, Bogart. *Ethn Dis.* 2001;11(3):554-63)
  - Treated with less courtesy than other people
  - Treated with less respect than other people
  - Received poorer services than other people
  - Had a doctor or nurse act as if he or she thinks you were not smart
  - Had a doctor or nurse act as if he or she was afraid of you
  - Had a doctor or nurse act as if he or she was better than you
  - Felt like a doctor or nurse was not listening to what you were saying

- Dichotomized: Any vs. none
General Racism

- **4 items** (LaVeist et al. *Med Care Res Rev.* 2000;57(Suppl 1):146-61)
  - Doctors treat African American and White people the same
  - Racial discrimination in a doctor’s office is common
  - In most hospitals, African Americans and Whites receive the same kind of care
  - African Americans can receive the care they want as equally as White people can

- **Dichotomized: Any vs. none**
Measures of Patient Experiences

- Reported problems with care
- Screening behavior
Reported Problems with Care

- Questionnaire on Stress in Patients with Diabetes, Doctor-Patient Relationship subscale
  (Herschbach et al. *Health Psychol.* 1997;16(2):171-4)
  - Different doctors give you different information regarding your diabetes
  - You feel insufficiently informed about your diabetes
  - Doctors do not spend enough time with you
  - Your doctor does not treat your diabetes in the best possible way

- Dichotomized: Any vs. none
Screening Behavior

- Documentation in medical record of screenings recommended for diabetic complications (Diabetes Quality Improvement Project)
  - HbA1c
  - Dilated eye exam
  - Comprehensive foot exam
  - Urine protein test
  - Fasting lipid test (past 2 years)

- Dichotomized: All vs. fewer than all
## Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American (N=50)</th>
<th>White (N = 50)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean age (SD)</strong></td>
<td>63 (11)</td>
<td>70 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $20K</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$20K</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school, GED or less</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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*p<.05*
# Prevalence of Perceived Racial Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal discrimination, single-item</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal discrimination, multi-item</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General racism</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>40%*</td>
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*Significant race differences (p<.05) in logistic regression models adjusted for age, income, and education
Comparison of Perceived Racial Discrimination across Measures

- Mixed effects logistic regression, adjusted for race, age, income, and education
- No difference between single-item and multi-item measures of personal discrimination \( (OR = 1.80, \text{CI} = 0.61 - 5.32) \)
- Higher prevalence on general racism measure compared to single-item \( (OR = 36.53, \text{CI} = 7.95 - 167.89) \) and multi-item measures of personal discrimination \( (OR = 20.28, \text{CI} = 5.12 - 80.34) \)
Association of Perceived Discrimination with Patient Experiences

- Separate logistic regression models testing each perceived discrimination measure as predictor of:
  - Reported problems with care
  - Screening behavior
- All models adjusted for race, age, income, and education
Reported Problems with Care

- Personal Discrimination, Single-Item
- Personal Discrimination, Multi-Item
- General Racism

OR of ≥1 Reported Problem
Screening Behavior

Personal Discrimination, Single-Item

Personal Discrimination, Multi-item

General Racism

OR of Having All Recommended Screenings
Conclusions

- Reports of perceived racial discrimination in health care vary across measures
  - Higher prevalence on measures of general racism than of personal experiences
Conclusions

- Which measures of perceived discrimination are associated with patient experiences may depend on the type of experience being examined
  - Patient reports: single-item might be less sensitive than multi-item measures
  - Patient behavior: general racism measure might be less sensitive than measures of personal discrimination
Bottom Line

- Multi-item measures that assess personal experiences of perceived discrimination may be the optimal choice for healthcare systems interested in assessing prevalence and impact of perceived discrimination
Limitations

- Limited statistical power
- Limited generalizability
- Focused on perceived (vs. observed) discrimination
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