

Are Minority Dentists More Likely to Care for Medicaid Patients?

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INTRODUCTION

- Racial/ethnic minorities and Medicaid patients are disproportionately affected by dental disease.
- Medicaid is the largest program in the federal safety net.
- Access to dental care for Medicaid patients is a significant public health problem.

INTRODUCTION

- Workforce issues are a significant barrier to accessing quality care.
- There are policies and innovative programs to address oral health disparities.
- Little attention has been given to racial/ethnic workforce disparities.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine factors associated with acceptance of new Medicaid patients by dentists.
- To determine specifically whether minority dentists are more likely to accept new Medicaid patients.

METHODS

- Analyzed data collected in 2001 and 2003 Wisconsin Dentist Workforce Survey.
- Survey completed as part of the dentist license renewal process.

METHODS

- Data collected included: dentists' education information, patient related data, practice information, and race/ethnicity information.
- Race/ethnicity was dichotomized as White vs. Minority based on self-identification.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

- Bivariate analysis used to identify significant independent variables.
- Multivariable logistic regression analyses performed.
- Backward elimination selection procedure employed in analyses.
- 0.05 statistical significance level used.

RESULTS

- 94% of Wisconsin licensed dentists responded in 2001; 55% in 2003.
- 2,078 dentists practicing in Wisconsin reported their race/ethnicity in 2001; 1,684 reported in 2003.
- Minority dentists constituted 5% of the dental workforce in Wisconsin.

Study Population Characteristics

Characteristic	% of Dentists Who Are		<i>P</i>
	Whites (N=1,980)	Minorities (N=98)	
Accepts New Patients			0.006
Yes	93	94	
No	6	2	
Unknown	1	4	
Accepts New Medicaid Patients			<0.001
Yes	19	35	
No	78	60	
Unknown	3	5	
Serves Medicaid Patients			0.009
Yes	41	52	
No	57	43	
Unknown	2	5	
Year degree granted			<0.001
Prior to 1980	36	22	
1980-1999	28	43	
2000 or later	1	4	
Unknown	35	31	

Study Population Characteristics

Characteristic	% of Dentists Who Are		<i>P</i>
	Whites (N=1,980)	Minorities (N=98)	
Location of Degree Granting Inst.			<0.001
USA	99.5	90	
Abroad	0.2	9	
Unknown	0.3	1	
Practice Size			<0.001
Small (1-3 dentists)	72	58	
Large (> 3 dentists)	14	32	
Unknown	14	10	
Practice Type			0.032
Non-government	82	83	
Government	1	4	
Unknown	17	13	
Provide Charity Work			<0.001
Yes	47	26	
No	47	64	
Unknown	6	10	

Bivariate Analysis: Factors Associated with Dentist Accepting New Medicaid Patients

Characteristic	Proportion of Dentists Accepting New Medicaid		<i>P</i>
	%	Crude Odds Ratio (95% CI)	
Race/Ethnicity			<0.001
White	19	Referent	
Minorities	35	2.35 (1.52, 3.64)	
Year degree granted			0.223
Prior to 1980	22	Referent	
1980-1999	21	0.94 (0.72, 1.23)	
2000 or later	16	0.65 (0.19, 2.26)	
Unknown	17	0.76 (0.58, 0.98)	
Location of degree granting Inst			0.001
USA	20	Referent	
Abroad	58	9.20 (2.37, 35.71)	
Unknown	14	0.66 (0.08, 5.47)	

Bivariate Analysis: Factors Associated with Dentist Accepting New Medicaid Patients

Characteristic	Proportion of Dentists Accepting New Medicaid		<i>P</i>
	%	Crude Odds Ratio (95% CI)	
Practice Size			<0.001
Small	16	Referent	
Large	31	2.41 (1.82, 3.20)	
Unknown	26	1.93 (1.43, 2.61)	
Practice Type			<0.001
Non-government	19	Referent	
Government	44	5.11 (2.19, 11.93)	
Unknown	24	1.46 (1.11, 1.93)	
Charity work			<0.001
No	19	Referent	
Yes	19	1.02 (0.82, 1.28)	
Unknown	27	2.23 (1.41, 3.50)	

Multivariable Analysis: Factors Associated with Accepting New Medicaid Patients

Independent Variable	Odds Ratio (95% CI) of Accepting New Medicaid Patients	<i>P</i>
Race/ethnicity (referent: white) Minority (non-white)	2.06 (1.30, 3.25)	0.002
Practice Type (referent: non-government) Government Unknown	5.00 (2.07, 12.08) 1.06 (0.70, 1.61)	0.002
Practice size (referent: small) Large (>3 dentists) Unknown	2.25 (1.69, 3.00) 1.93 (1.25, 2.99)	<0.001
Charity work (referent: No) Yes Unknown	1.11 (0.88, 1.40) 2.31 (1.45, 3.68)	0.002

CONCLUSIONS

- Racial/ethnic minority dentists are significantly more likely than white dentists to accept new Medicaid patients.
- In Wisconsin, minorities comprise 12% of the population but only 5% of dentists.

LIMITATIONS

- Responding to the question on dentists' race/ethnicity was optional.
- Data is from 2001.
- This study only reflects dental workforce issues in the state of Wisconsin.

IMPLICATIONS

- Increasing dental workforce diversity to match the diversity of the general US population may significantly increase access to dental care for poor and racial/ethnic minority Americans.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Collaborative recruitment programs based on groups of regional schools.
- Workshops that focus on the effective operation of admissions committees.
- Summer enrichment programs for minority college students interested in dentistry.