

Immigrant Children – Healthcare Access and Disparity

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Essay Summary:

Immigrant children who entered the U.S. after August 22, 1996 faced many legal and cultural barriers in accessing healthcare. The recent Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) gives states the option to provide Medicaid and CHIP coverage to eligible lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant women regardless of their date of entry into the U.S.

This essay identifies the existing system of access, outlines the obstacles faced by immigrant children, and encourages healthcare leaders to correlate trends analyzing immigration rates, migration patterns internally and primary care provider availability to their impact on access and disparity issues among immigrant children. This essay discusses medical expenditure profiles, civic contributions by immigrants and federal funding options as reasons for healthcare leaders to invest resources in resolving this situation. Finally, this essay makes recommendations to healthcare leaders about the key steps to successfully implement CHIPRA and reduce disparities in access for immigrant children.

Poster Summary:

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PRWORA:
In 1996, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was enacted restricting the eligibility of noncitizen immigrants for public benefits. Lawfully admitted immigrants were barred from Medicaid for their first five years in the country if they entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996.

Immigrant families with varying immigration statuses had different legal rights which affected their eligibility for public programs such as Medicaid and CHIP

Lack of culturally appropriate access
* Language barriers,
* Lack of acculturation to the US Healthcare System,
* Diverse cultural / healthcare beliefs

Lack of a medical home
> 1/8* of low-income US born children do not have medical homes (Lissard and Ku, 2003)

CHIPRA:
In 2009, Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) was signed into law which gives states the option to eliminate the five-year waiting period now imposed on lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant women in Medicaid and State CHIP, and it was designed to finance SCHIP for the next four and a half years.

Why should we CARE? In May 2009, only 16 states and the District of Columbia, had state-funded programs to cover lawfully residing recent immigrant children and/or pregnant women

So What?

1) Immigration Trends into USA	2) Migration Patterns within USA	3) Projected Primary Care Provider (PCP) availability	4) Medical Expenditures for Immigrant Children	5) Immigrants Civic Contributions and Federal Funding availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If current trends (see below) continue, in 2050, 82% of population increase will be due to immigrants and their US-born children. One in five Americans will be an immigrant in 2050 34% of the nation’s children will have an immigrant parent <p style="font-size: small;">Immigration Rates, by Decade: 1820 through 2000* Average annual immigrants per 100 population</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Note: Unauthorized immigration is not legal immigration in any way only. Rates shown are rounded. * 2000-2005 rate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 1990 and 2005, foreign born people doubled in 27 states Highest growth occurred in Southern and Central states like GA, NC, CO, NC Gateway states like CA or NY had slower growth <p><i>Pew Hispanic Center, 2007:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 states with highest number of foreign-born individuals: CA, NY, TX, FL, IL, NJ, AZ, MA, GA and D.C. 10 states with the largest percentage change in foreign-born population between 2000 and 2007 (in descending order): SC, AK, NV, TN, AB, AZ, GA, NC, NB, OK 	<p><i>Physician’s Foundation, 2008:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 78% of physicians believe there is a shortage of PCPs today 49% said that by 2011 they will reduce number of patients they see or stop practicing entirely. 65% said Medicaid reimbursement is less than cost of care. 33% of physicians have closed their practices to Medicaid patients According to Irving-based consulting company, percentage of physicians accepting Medicaid is decreasing – e.g. Dallas 38.6% vs. National Average 55% 	<p><i>Mohanty et al., 2005:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare expenditures for insured immigrant children 60% lower than insured US-born children Healthcare expenditures for uninsured immigrant children was 86% lower than for uninsured US-born children Expenditures among higher income immigrant children was 53% lower than among higher income US-born children <p><i>Ku and Matani, 2001:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mean number of ED visits among immigrant children lower than among US-born children, but per capita expenditures were more than three times higher 	<p><i>Capps et al., 2006:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigrant households in Washington, DC represent 19% of region’s total income and 18% of all taxes paid Although on average they have lower incomes than US-born households, they paid same share of income in taxes <p><i>CHIP Tips, 2009 – a, b</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States can submit state plan amendment to receive federal funding for eligible children and/or pregnant women States can also receive Performance Bonus, designed to help states with costs resulting from enrolling eligible children in Medicaid above targets specified in the law

What can we do?

- Look at best practices within USA
- Build partnerships with communities to develop culturally appropriate interventions
- Seek creative ideas and work collaboratively to implement them

Future Focus Areas:

- Measure cost-effectiveness and sustainability of solutions intended to decrease disparities in healthcare access
- Analyze and trend children immigrant status, insurance coverage status as well as healthcare expenditure costs
- Research focus on restructuring provider payment in private and public markets

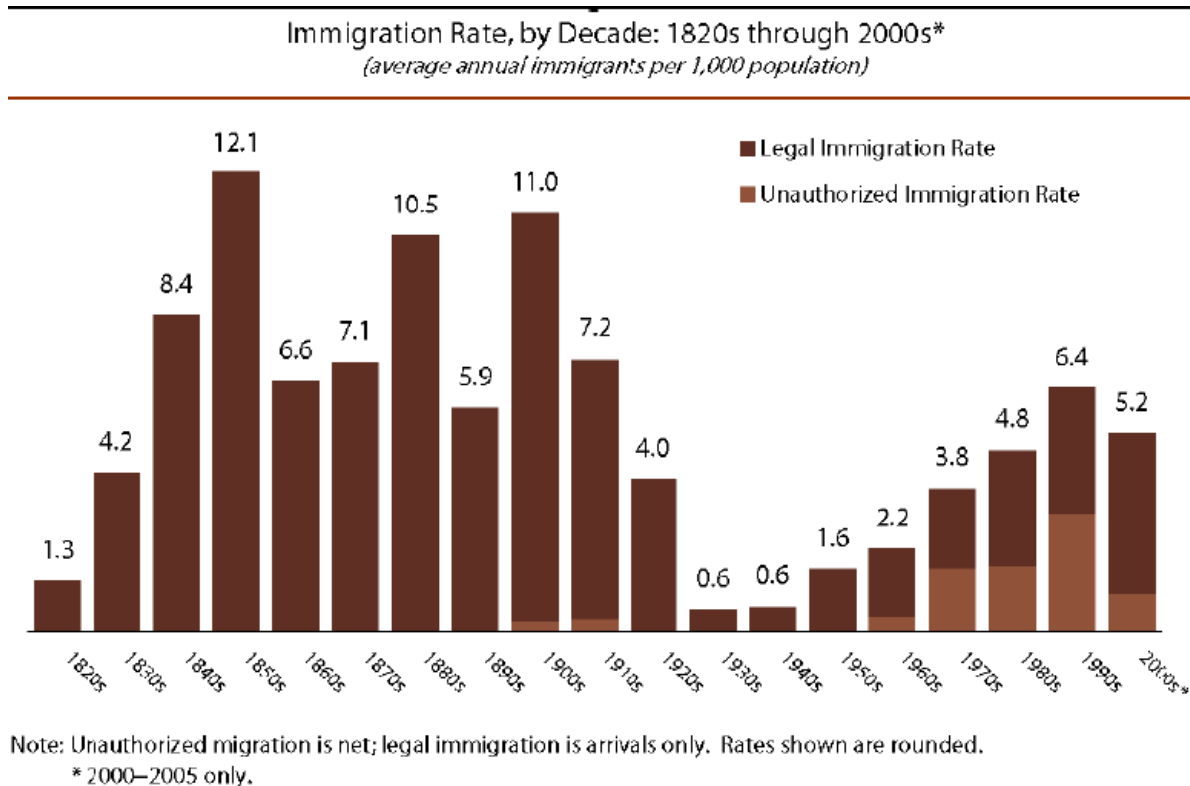
Key Data:

Table 1

Simplified Guide to Immigration Status and Federal Eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP

Immigration Status	Definition	Program Eligibility Status
Native citizen	Born in the United States	Eligible
Naturalized citizen	Foreign-born, but became a U.S. citizen through naturalization	Eligible
Lawful permanent resident	Noncitizen with permission to live and work permanently in the United States; has a "green card"	Under 1996 welfare law, those admitted after August 22, 1996, are ineligible during their first five years in the United States, but may receive emergency medical treatment during this period. Other immigrant-specific eligibility rules may pertain even after the five-year period expires.
Refugee/asylee	Admitted to the United States because of fear of persecution in the home country	Eligible for at least first seven years in the United States, under 1996 welfare law
Undocumented alien	Either entered the United States without permission or violated the terms of his or her visa	Not eligible, but may receive emergency medical care
Other lawfully present immigrants	Includes foreign-born people with temporary visas (for example, students, work visas, tourists), persons granted temporary protected status, applicants for asylum, and others with pending immigration status	Not eligible, but some may receive emergency medical care

Source: Lessard and Ku, 2003



Source: Passel and Cohn, 2008

Recommendations:

Healthcare executives at all levels must be bold in their outlook and outreach to improve access for the pediatric immigrant subpopulation, but also actively integrate other subpopulations not mentioned in this essay.

First, Look Within:

The U.S. Health System, for all the criticism it has been receiving recently, is still renowned for best practices, great quality and excellent outcomes. Healthcare leaders must look within their peer group, as well as beyond, to identify those best practices and implement them wherever applicable. Some potential practices have already been identified by CHIPRA and included as part of its performance bonus option. However, there are many other such unique ideas that have been implemented successfully all over the country (Cousineau and Farias, 2009; Flores *et al.*, 2005; Marx *et al.*, 2009; Reid *et al.*, 2009). For example, the Department of San Francisco Public Health Department defined patient panels and automatic patient assignment for their community primary care clinics and have seen an increase in physician satisfaction and improved access (Marx *et al.*, 2009). As other states analyze the trends for influx in migrant populations, it would be highly desirable to study those states that previously were havens for immigrants to study possible solutions as well as prevent potential mistakes.

Second, Community Partnerships:

Any attempt to improve access or decrease disparities must focus on culturally appropriate interventions. America is considered a land of immigrants, and the population mix is projected to be increasingly diverse in the coming years. Therefore, efforts to integrate them into society, especially healthcare, must be culturally appropriate as well. As healthcare leaders, it becomes imperative that a focus on culturally appropriate practices be developed at an outreach level as well as at the level of care provision. Identifying culturally appropriate solutions requires a partnership with the specific community in question. For example, Lessard and Ku (2003) recommend partnering with trusted community-based organizations (CBO) or community health outreach workers. One example of such a partnership is the collaboration between the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and the state's Department of Human Services. The two organizations work together to improve CBOs' capacity to promote immigrant access to public health coverage and other services. Similarly, many Latino communities are served by community health outreach workers called promotoras. Promotoras are typically immigrant community volunteers who provide health education and outreach in homes and at farm labor camps (Lessard and Ku, 2003).

Third, Creativity is the Key:

Healthcare leaders should proactively seek creative ideas and work collaboratively to implement them. As described in this essay, language was a significant barrier for the immigrant pediatric population in accessing services as well as receiving appropriate care. The solution may need to be unconventional and creative to be successful. An option for outreach could be to focus on the teen pediatric population who are avid social media users. Healthcare leaders at the local level could collaborate to create a facebook page, in multiple languages if necessary, to raise awareness of Medicaid, CHIP, safety net clinics, and so on. If Disney can target its ads to children and thereby induce parents to bring their kids to Florida, is it wrong for healthcare leaders to use media to educate the public about health services? Another creative solution could involve creating a web-conference interpreter services by the State which could be accessed by any participating primary care physician.

Conclusion:

Healthcare reform is advancing upon all of us like the proverbial tsunami, relentless in its approach and unknowing in the depth of change that it will bring. Healthcare leaders and organizations seem to be braced for its arrival with bated breath, yet the approach seems quintessentially wrong. Like the palm tree, health services at the local, state and federal level, payors and providers alike, need to bend to the force of the tsunami's will. In its aftermath, like the same palm tree that will straighten to calm waters or destruction, healthcare leaders need to analyze policies, trend future issues and restructure the existing framework to implement policies effectively and efficiently, ensuring the health of all Americans – current and future. In this essay, CHIPRA was analyzed through a similar lens and a few recommendations have been made.

One of the major challenges in writing this essay and presenting this poster was the lack of comprehensive data on the population of children who are legal immigrants, the group that is targeted by both PRWORA and CHIPRA. Future research in this arena could focus on clearly indicating the three categories of immigrant children and their insurance coverage status – those who are recent legal immigrants, US born children with immigrant parents (authorized and not authorized), and unauthorized children. This would enable healthcare leaders to focus their resources in identifying and implementing policies aimed at addressing the issues faced by those specific subpopulations. Additional areas for research could also include a focus on restructuring provider payment in private and public markets and measuring the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of solutions intended to decrease disparities in accessing healthcare for low-income, immigrant populations.

This poster presentation has been made possible by funding and support from Children's Medical Center's Dallas Emergency Services Department as well as the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Student Assembly.

I would like to thank my preceptors and colleagues at Children's, my mentors at Hopkins, and my family for their contributions in making this a cohesive research paper. Their content matter expertise, support and feedback have been an invaluable resource as I learnt about CHIPRA and the challenges that legal immigrant children faced.

Thank you!

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