

Poster #20

Research Study

Title: "Is There a Similarity Between Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics of Volunteers and the Patient Population of an Underserved Clinic? A Single-Clinic Survey Study"

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Introduction and Objective. UHI CommunityCare Clinic located in Miami Gardens, Florida provides free healthcare services for patients who are uninsured and whose household income falls below the 200% federal poverty level. To best support this underserved community, consisting of a vast immigrant population, UHI Clinic's Volunteer Program selects pre-health students motivated to work in community medicine and seeking to enhance their applications with valuable clinical and volunteer experience. Volunteers are directly exposed to challenges commonly faced by this patient population and have an opportunity to play an active role in their access to healthcare. The purpose of this study is to determine if similarities exist between the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of volunteers and the patient population of this clinic.

Methods. A voluntary, anonymous Qualtrics survey was distributed to current clinic volunteers. The survey consisted of short-response, multiple choice, and binary questions assessing personal and parental birthplace, history of need-based financial aid, social/financial hardships similar to the patient population, personal or family history of being uninsured, and their main motivations for volunteering in a free community clinic. Descriptive analysis of survey responses was performed, with response content categorized by theme as appropriate.

Results. A total of 30 survey responses were obtained for a response rate of 88% (30/34). Among these volunteers, 57% stated they were born outside of the US. In addition, 97% stated at least one of their parents was born outside of the US. 93% of respondents reported having been awarded need-based financial aid in the past. A total of 73% of respondents reported having experienced similar social/financial hardships to the patient population, and 70% stated that they or their family have previously been uninsured. As their main motivations for volunteering, the most common themes included working with the underserved population, personal identification with the population served, and obtaining clinical experience.

Conclusions-Implications. The volunteer cohort at UHI CommunityCare Clinic is composed of a significant proportion of foreign-born and first-generation individuals and those who have experienced social/financial hardships. These findings help support similarities in socio-economic and demographic characteristics as driving factors in motivating student volunteerism in the underserved community.