

Pregnancy, Race, & the Pandemic: Implications for Perinatal Integrated Care

#009

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Objectives:

Integrated behavioral health (IBH) programs in obstetric settings provide much needed access to mental health services for pregnant women during vulnerable time periods. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted healthcare systems worldwide, creating both challenges and opportunities in patient engagement and service delivery. Emerging literature suggests that the pandemic's disproportionate impact on people living in poverty and people of color exacerbated existing racial and socioeconomic disparities in maternal health. The current study examines changes in patient engagement in integrated perinatal mental health by race and ethnicity before and during COVID-19.

Methods:

Participants were 1,195 perinatal women up to six months postpartum who received prenatal care through the University of Colorado obstetric and midwifery practices between September 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020. Data on demographics and pregnancy, birth, and mental health histories were collected at the time of enrollment.

Results:

Analyses revealed significant changes in race and ethnicity in patients enrolled in IBH, with Black women less likely to be enrolled and Latina women more likely to be enrolled during COVID. Preliminary analyses also revealed changes in engagement with OB care in general. Differences in types, duration, and frequency of IBH services were observed across different demographic groups before and after the onset of COVID-19.

Conclusions:

This study highlights the pandemic's impact on patient engagement in prenatal care and IBH services across demographic groups. Understanding how demographics may influence engagement with OB and integrated behavioral health will help inform future patient care and service delivery in the context of ongoing pandemic-related challenges.

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