

RESEARCH SUMMARY:

Few Differences Found in Reasons for Referral, Diagnoses, and Evaluations on the Basis of Patient Race/Ethnicity

Differences in the healthcare provided to racial and ethnic minority patients is a concern as health outcomes for these group are often worse than for white patients. However, there are few studies of differences in the care provided to racial and ethnic minority patients compared to white patients seen by developmental-behavioral pediatricians.

Fifty-six developmental-behavioral pediatricians from 12 hospital-based developmental-behavioral pediatrics practices completed surveys for over 780 patients regarding why the patient was seen, the evaluations completed or recommended, and the diagnoses given. Three hundred forty-nine patients were non-Hispanic white, and 406 were nonwhite (187 Hispanic, 135 Black, 58 Asian, and 26 other/mixed).

Non-Hispanic white and nonwhite families differed in the amount of education parents had, the frequency in which a language other than English was spoken at home, and the percent who had public insurance. The analysis of racial/ethnic differences in care corrected for these differences. The average wait time for an evaluation was about 20 weeks and did not differ between non-Hispanic white and nonwhite families. The only difference in diagnoses was that sleep problems were a more common diagnosis in the non-Hispanic white families. The types of tests done were also similar with the exception that non-Hispanic white children were more likely to have genetic testing, an evaluation by an eye doctor, and an evaluation for treatment of behavior problems with medication.

The study demonstrates that for the most part non-Hispanic white children and non-white children are referred to developmental-behavioral pediatricians for similar reasons and receive similar diagnoses. Most types of evaluations occurred with similar frequency, but genetic testing, evaluation by an eye doctor, and evaluation for treatment of behavior problems with medication are more common in non-Hispanic white children. Further research is needed to understand these differences.

Reference:

Augustyn M, Silver EJ, Blum NJ, High P, Roizen N, Stein REK. DBP Evaluations in DBPNet Sites: Is race/ethnicity a significant factor in care? *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 2020;41(1):23-30. PMID: 31335580.

DBPNet is supported by cooperative agreement UA3MC20218 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.