Barriers to Mental Health Service Utilization Among Depressed Minority Adolescents and Young Adults: An Integrative Review

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ABSTRACT

With mental health awareness on the rise, depression has become a major public issue, especially in adolescents and young adults. Epidemiologists find suicide to be the third leading cause of death between the ages of 15-24, demonstrating the increased prevalence and potential danger of depression in today’s youth. However, as alarming as these numbers are, a majority of depressed adolescents and young adults are on the receiving end of poor treatment in the healthcare setting. Even more disturbing are the treatment utilization rates among minorities, which are significantly lower than average. What is causing this discrepancy? While recent research shows that there are common barriers to seeking treatment across all races and ethnicities, this integrative review aims to identify mental health service barriers that are specific to certain demographics. This review analyzes both qualitative and quantitative studies of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos. Specifically, the analysis will examine whether or not the quantitative data is concurrent with the data extrapolated from qualitative interviews of each ethnicity. Finally, the analysis will compare the barriers of each race/ethnicity and seek to find a better way to deliver culturally sensitive mental health treatment to eliminate these barriers for help-seeking adolescents and young adults.