ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic position plays an important role in poor health behavior. People of lower socioeconomic status suffer disproportionately from nearly all diseases and have higher rates of mortality than people of higher socioeconomic status. Many of the conditions that have a strong association with socioeconomic status include cardiovascular disease and its outcomes, infant and maternal mortality, uninsured injury, homicide and suicide, and the promotion of various diseases.

Health disparities are present across all of these diseases. Our focus is on cardiovascular health. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) results from multiple factors, including poverty, environmental tobacco smoke, inadequate access to health care, individual and behavioral factors, and educational inequalities. As the gap in health disparities is steadily increasing in Newark, it is essential to reduce this disparity among the disadvantaged. Involvement in all forms of education is vital to improving the unfavorable consequences of health disparities such as teenage pregnancies, poor dietary choices, inadequate physical activity, and emotional strain, substance abuse, and gang involvement. For example, about 40% of Newark children are overweight or obese. Also in Newark, the birth rates for teen mothers were more than twice (66 per 1000 girls) compared to the rest of the state of New Jersey (18 per 1000 girls). These health risks have a significant impact on how well students perform in school, which can perpetuate the cycle of lower socioeconomic status and ultimately fail to meet the basic scaffolding of health, education and family support is needed to achieve optimal lifelong well-being.

OBJECTIVES

Our program will actively engage at-risk youths in Newark, NJ in order to expose them to the rewards of working with a diverse population. Objective for the graduate/medical students of our program is to:

1. Provide an interactive introduction to exciting health topics as an instructive and informative way.
2. Teach the students about potential career options in health-related fields.
3. Build confidence in students and improve their career prospects.
4. Build self-esteem and motivation in youths to continue their education and improve their career opportunities.

RESULTS

Vital Signs

- Skills acquired: Students learned to take vital signs and their significance in monitoring cardiovascular disease.
- Outcomes: Students were able to take vital signs accurately.

Diabetes

- Skills acquired: Students learned to identify diabetes and its implications.
- Outcomes: Students were able to recognize and discuss the symptoms and treatment of diabetes.

Women’s Health

- Skills acquired: Students learned about the prevention of breast cancer and its importance.
- Outcomes: Students were able to understand the importance of breast cancer screening.

CONCLUSIONS

Socioeconomic position plays a major role in poor health behavior. One of the factors that affect health disparities is socioeconomic status along with environmental threats, inadequate access to healthcare, individual and behavioral factors, and educational inequalities. Newark, the largest city in New Jersey, holds an alarming rate of underinsured people and the disparity in health outcomes have been increasing overtime. Moreover, Newark was home to about 73,000 children in 2012, representing more than one-quarter, or about 26 percent, of its total population. Project BEAM is a program under my nonprofit, Odarah Outreach, that is being implemented in the city of Newark in order to decrease health disparity for long-term and to improve health practice among at-risk youths in the city of Newark, who make up a significant portion of the population. The students will be educated through motivational seminars and workshops that explore the different health topics such as nutrition and exercise, hygiene, and the different disease manifestations.

After working with the youths in the city of Newark, I have learned that some of the problems stem from the household. The unstable household that includes drug addiction and the overwhelming stress that comes with single parenting has led to negative effects of child development. These conditions have lead to poorer health outcomes and higher health services costs.