

Assessing mental health barriers to the virtual learning environment as a result of the covid-19 pandemic on medical students

Christeebella Akpala MCASOM

BACKGROUND

- COVID-19's effects on the health of vulnerable populations (i.e. racial and ethnic minority groups) are still emerging; however, current data suggest a disproportionate burden of illness and death among groups with substance use disorders (SUD), HIV/AIDS and the transgender community.
- The widening of healthcare disparities in the setting of COVID-19, makes it important to explore the new implicit and explicit barriers faced by vulnerable populations in accessing healthcare during this time

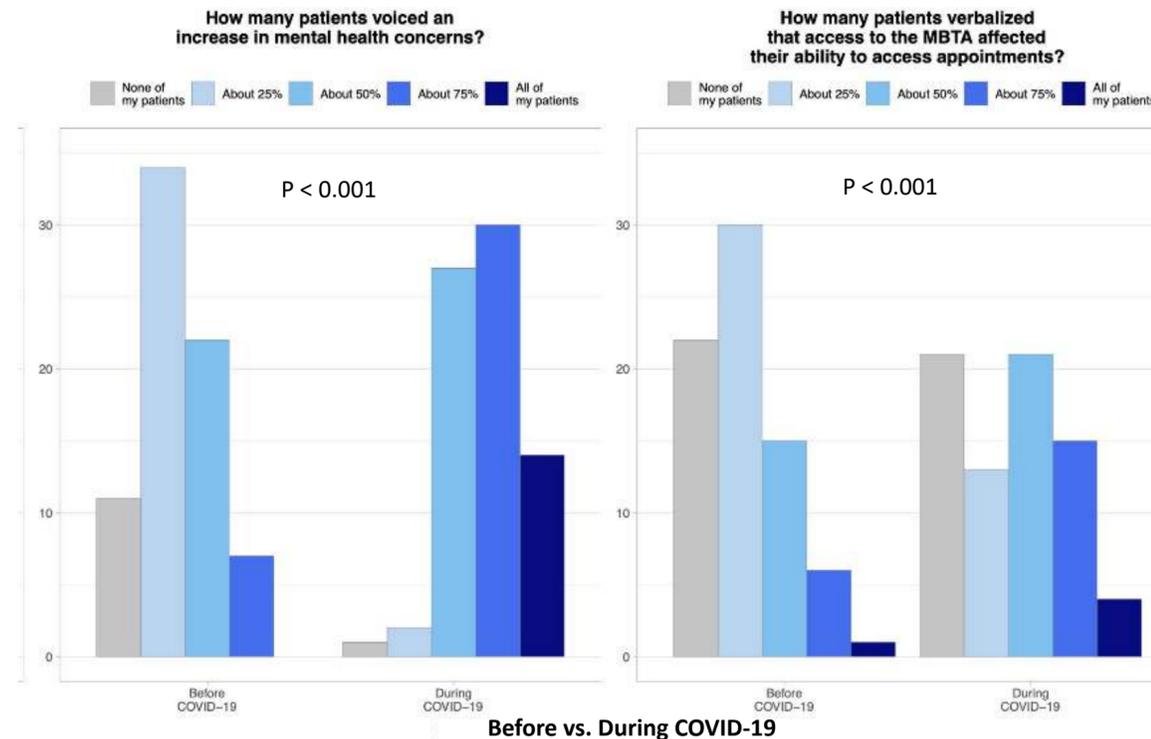
OBJECTIVES

- To explore socioeconomic barriers by surveying healthcare providers at Fenway Health about the impacts of COVID-19 on their patient's healthcare access.
- To create avenues to mitigate barriers that widen the health disparities for vulnerable patients, especially in a public health crisis.

METHODOLOGY

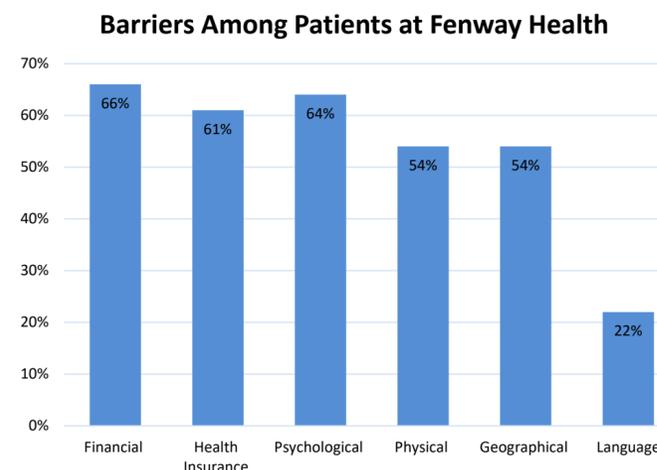
- Cross-sectional pilot study
- Sample: Fenway Health Providers & Staff
- Measure: Barriers to healthcare access
 - Self-administered
 - Qualitative and quantitative questions
- Procedure: Survey links were sent via email
- Statistical analysis: Z-test, Fisher's exact test

RESULTS



Significant correlation with frequency of outcomes reported when comparing "before" and "during" COVID-19 ($p < 0.001$).

My patients/clients are informed of the resources available to them under the CARES Act.	
Strongly Disagree	15 (20.3%)
Disagree	21 (28.4%)
Unsure	31 (41.9%)
Agree	7 (9.5%)
Strongly Agree	0 (0%)



Frequency of barrier types reported were significantly different ($p < 0.001$).

CONCLUSION

- It is evident that a lot of work needs to be done to facilitate efficient transportation, provide mental health services, and make appointments more convenient.
- Most providers identified a lack of education and understanding among their patients to access resources under the CARES Act.
- Financial barriers were the most common and language barriers were the least common.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Appropriate educational tools that Fenway Health can use to educate their patients about the CARES Act. Educational materials such as brochures, pamphlets, and leaflets.
- Addition of CARES Act link to the patient portal
- Proposal to provide transportation vouchers to patients with no transportation
- Propose an increase in mental health screenings during COVID-19 & other public health crisis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- National Medical Fellowships Primary Care Leadership Program
- Fenway Health, Boston, MA
- John-Paul Bettencourt, DO
- Luke Patten, MS, Center of Innovative Design and Analysis
- The GE Foundation