Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in TRICARE

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MATHEMATICA
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Background

- **Health disparities a serious problem in the U.S.**
- **Federal government major provider and financier of health care for minority populations**
- **TRICARE - the DoD's health care program**
 - **Those entitled to benefits during or consequent to service**
 - **Families and survivors of these members**
 - **Coverage provided through 5 separate programs**
- **Equity in health care part of the larger DoD mission to ensure "equality of treatment and opportunity"**

Study Motivation

- **Prior studies examine disparities in other federally-funded systems of care**
 - Many have found fewer disparities
- **Few studies have examined the TRICARE program**
 - Very diverse population
 - Common benefits removes some variation in benefit
- **Determine whether patterns of disparities observed in U.S. healthcare system are present in TRICARE**

- **2007 Health Care Survey of DoD Beneficiaries (HCSDB)**
 - **Quarterly survey of active duty military, retirees, and family**
 - **Stratified random sample of 50,000 adult beneficiaries**
 - **Overall response rate 25.1% but wide variation**
 - Active duty: 15.6%
 - Retirees aged 65 or older: 77%
 - **Sample sizes increased to account for survey nonresponse**
 - **Weights included for nonresponse and sampling design**

Methods

- **Descriptive analysis comparing 2007 HCSDB with:**
 - **2006 National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database (NCBD) 3.0**
 - Used to compare health status, access, and satisfaction
 - **AHRQ's 2007 National Healthcare Disparities Report (NHDR)**
 - Used to compare data on use of preventives services
- **Stratifying variables**
 - **Race/ethnicity**
 - **Active duty status**

Outcome Measures

- **Health status**
 - Self rated health
- **Access to care**
 - Ability to find an acceptable personal doctor or nurse
 - Ability to see a specialist when needed
- **Satisfaction with care**
 - Doctor listened to patient's concerns
 - Doctor was courteous and respectful
- **Use of preventive services**
 - Smoking cessation counseling
 - Colon cancer screening
 - Pap smear
 - Mammography
 - Annual flu shot

Statistical Analyses

- **Two sets of comparisons for each measure**
 - Blacks and Hispanics versus whites within category
 - Magnitude of disparity versus civilian health plans
- **t-tests of differences in proportions**
 - Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons
- **Test statistics and standard errors estimated to account for complex sample design**

Sociodemographics

Variable	White	Black	Hispanic
Age			
18-34	27.0	26.1	39.9
35-64	62.7	69.1	56.0
65 or older	10.2	4.8	4.1
Male	49.9	52.6	45.4
Education			
High school	20.6	20.4	24.0
Some college	40.0	50.5	47.4
College grad	39.3	29.2	28.7
Duty status			
Active duty	54.5	57.0	65.6
Retirees/survivors	45.5	43.0	34.4

Health Status

% Reporting Good/Excellent Self-rated Health

NOTE: Civilian data based on 2006 National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, Commercial

*Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to whites

†Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to civilian plans

Access to Care

% Reporting No Problem Seeing a Specialist

NOTE: Civilian data based on 2006 National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, Commercial

*Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to whites

†Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to civilian plans

Satisfaction with Care

NOTE: Civilian data based on 2006 National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, Commercial

*Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to whites

†Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to civilian plans

Use of Preventive Services

% Receiving Smoking Cessation Counseling

NOTE: Civilian data based on 2007 National Healthcare Disparities Report

*Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to whites

†Indicates significant difference ($p < 0.05$), compared to civilian plans

Use of Preventive Services

NOTE: Civilian data based on 2007 National Healthcare Disparities Report

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Discussion

- **Some disparities exist in the TRICARE program**
 - Disparities are smaller or reversed from those in civilian plans
- **Findings could help guide health care reform**
 - Are coverage and access sufficient to eliminate disparities?
 - Cultural aspects of DoD and MHS
- **Need for more research on disparities in TRICARE**
 - Better collection of data on race/ethnicity
 - Link HSCDB with claims to enable multivariate models
 - Look at treatments and outcomes