Children With Acute Asthma Experience Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Care

Black children with asthma access clinics less frequently than Latino and white children, but visit emergency departments more.

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For children with asthma, access to community health centers (CHCs) for acute, chronic and preventive asthma care can mean fewer emergency department visits and better overall health.

But a new study published in Annals of Family Medicine found that Black children with asthma accessed CHCs less frequently than white children, while Latino children visited CHCs the most. What's more, Black children visited hospital emergency departments more than white and Latino children.

Using the electronic health record data of 41,276 children with asthma over a seven-year period, this observational study found that "54% of Black children had fewer than two visits annually [considered minimum standard care], while for white and Spanish-preferring Latino children, it was 49.2% and 30.1%, respectively," according to a news release.

This is the first study of its kind to show that patterns of use of acute care services at clinics and emergency departments are different for Black and Spanish-preferring Latino children compared with white children.

Data showed that while most children in the study experienced a wealth gap, Black children did so the most. "Seven in 10 (73%) [Black children] lived in households that were below 138% of the federal poverty level, compared to 54% to 58% in white and Latino children," the study found. Eliminating this wealth gap could help improve outcomes for Black children with asthma.

Financial instability and the inability of parents to take time off work are some of the factors that can impede access to care.

"The findings from this research underscore the multifaceted nature of minority health and health disparities. There are multiple social factors and levels of influence that can impact health behavior within a population with the same diagnosis, and these must be explored to better

understand and address health disparities," National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities director Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD, said in the news release.

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