

Title: Community and Social Barriers to Primary Care Access amongst Black Fathers

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Background: Despite evidence that preventative care leads to improved health outcomes, few Black men have a primary care provider (PCP). While poor paternal health has been associated with worse health in his children, little is known regarding the social and community influences on Black fathers' use of primary care.

Objective: To describe barriers to healthcare access faced by non-Hispanic Black (NHB) fathers.

Methods: Qualitative two-phase study conducted with Black fathers recruited in-person while attending a wellness visit with their child at an urban practice serving families predominantly insured by Medicaid. Phase 1 involved one-time telephone or Zoom interviews post-visit. Phase 2 consisted of a questionnaire during the visit, followed by scheduled 1:1 interview. Interviewers, also NHB men with healthcare and social service experience, explored individual and community-related barriers to healthcare access, interest in obtaining a PCP, strategies to enhance primary care utilization, and suggestions for engaging fathers in their healthcare. Deidentified transcripts were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis with constant comparison.

Results: 69 fathers consented (46 in phase 1, 23 in phase 2), with 14 completing interviews (11 in phase 1, 3 in phase 2). Compared to those lost to follow-up, phase 2 interviewees had comparable government healthcare coverage and their most recent medical examination in the emergency room. However, personal health status rating and most recent doctor's appointment varied. Key barriers identified included: challenges accessing resources for new fathers/parents post-childbirth, work schedules conflicting with appointments, and managing competing family responsibilities. Recommendations for the healthcare system to enhance health and support for fathers included: adjusting clinic hours to include weekends and providing post-partum support for fathers with young children.

Conclusion: Interviews revealed barriers Black fathers face in accessing healthcare. Insights aim to develop accessible healthcare solutions, emphasizing flexible appointment times and mental health resources like post-childbirth counseling to reduce stress and improve health outcomes.