

Perceptions of Psychiatric Services Held by African-American Male Adults

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Did you know?



- Researchers have shown that regardless of age, nationality, race, or ethnicity, women utilize mental health services more often than do men.
- Social adversity is commonly associated with increased risk for psychiatric disorders.
- African-American males generally have a lower lifetime risk of developing a psychiatric disorder than their European-American counterparts.
- African-American males diagnosed with psychiatric disorders are usually more likely to be persistently ill than their European-American counterparts.
- African-Americans males are likely to discontinue the use of mental health services following the initial visit.

Referral Sources

- **Court/Prison System** -- African-American males are most often referred for mental health services and diagnosed as being mentally ill following violations of the law or during periods of incarceration.

or

- **Emergency Room/Primary Care** -- African Americans are more likely to seek mental health services following treatment from emergency services or primary care providers.

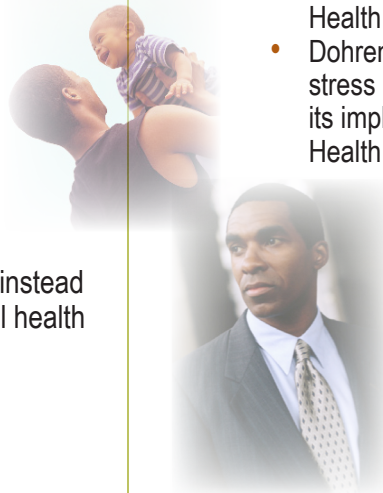
Access Barriers

- The belief held by African-American males that they can solve the problem and/or the belief that they do not have a problem that requires treatment.
- Lack of adequate insurance to cover mental health services.
- Lack of sufficient knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental illness.
- Many African-American males view the receipt of psychiatric services as a luxury and an unaffordable expense.



Cultural Barriers

- The stereotype that African-American males are more prone to violence contributes to the diagnosis of psychiatric illness by culturally biased clinicians.
- African-American patients may exhibit “healthy cultural paranoia” when interacting with European-American clinicians. However, clinicians, may misinterpret this cultural behavior as clinical paranoia and misdiagnose African Americans with psychiatric illnesses.
- A large percentage of African-American males believe that the use of psychotherapy is associated with weakness and diminished pride.
- There is a strong prohibition, among African-American males, on sharing information with those outside of the circle of family and trusted friends.
- Many African-American males are raised to believe that life will be difficult and that African Americans as a cultural group must cope with all adversity.
- African-American males often use prayer instead of psychiatric services to cope with mental health issues.



Future Recommendations

- Future research should focus on the incidence, prevalence, and persistence of mental illness across genders and ethnic groups.
- Clinicians must address all anxiety and concerns that they might have regarding offending or alienating clients, and they must be trained to respond appropriately to clients who react negatively to discussions of race in therapy.
- Clinicians should be prepared to explain in direct and understandable language, all diagnoses and how the use of psychiatric services will benefit the client.
- Develop quality improvement strategies to increase the quality of interventions and programs targeted to minority groups.
- Increase resources for mental health services in “safety net clinics,” where high percentages of ethnic minority individuals are treated.
- Train staff members to be culturally sensitive, professional, and motivational.
- Clinicians should collaborate with African-American religious institutions to help identify and treat mental health issues in the greater African-American community.

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