Medicaid suppresses racial disparities in health care among children with special health care needs: evidence from a multi-level mediation modeling analysis

Rose, R.A., Parish, S.L., Yoo, J., Grady, M.D., Powell, S.E., and Hicks-Sangster, T.K.
Social Science & Medicine. 2010;70(9):1263-1270

Abstract: This study examines whether the US public health insurance program Medicaid suppresses racial disparities in parental identification of service needs of their children with special health care needs (CSHCN). We analyze data from the 2001 US National Survey of CSHCN (n = 14,167 children). We examine three outcomes which were parental identification of (a) the child's need for professional care coordination, (b) the child's need for mental health services, and (c) the family's need for mental health services. A suppression analysis, which is a form of mediation analysis, was conducted. Our results show a disparity, reflected in a negative direct effect of race for all three outcomes: Black parents of CSHCN are less likely to report a need for services than White parents of CSHCN and Medicaid coverage was associated with reduced racial disparities in reporting the need for services. These analyses suggest receipt of Medicaid is associated with a suppression of racial disparities in reported need for services.