

Baylor College of Medicine
Second Annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Showcase
Tuesday, October 5, 2021

Title of Proposal: Incarceration and Healthcare: Addressing the Knowledge Gap for Trainees

BCM Mission Area: Education

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Abstract:

People who are incarcerated face a number of health issues, including higher suicide rates, multiple chronic health conditions, and difficulty accessing medication. Furthermore, people of color are more likely to be criminalized and unduly penalized, making up a significant portion of the population in jail or prison. While physicians, public health researchers, and other medical professionals have been aware of the health disparities affecting incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals for years, there have yet to be formal structures in place for student education on these topics and discussion of potential solutions. There is limited instruction during medical training on caring for incarcerated populations, despite the large percentages of training institutions that serve these patients. We have strides to make in terms of providing for more equitable and inclusive education on different patient populations, and this project serves as a launching point for addressing those gaps. To address this educational gap, we designed a 12-question survey for formerly incarcerated people and conducted an informal interview with the residents of Angela House. This survey assessed experiences with health care and treatment by healthcare providers. Preliminary results indicate that survey participants struggled to access their medications, felt that they were treated differently because of their interaction with the incarceration system, and overall rated their experience with the healthcare system as a 3.33 (± 2.66) on a scale from 0 (very negative) to 10 (very positive). We then used this data to design a curriculum for medical students. The session included a bias

exercise, background information about the U.S. and Texas incarceration systems, an interactive case study, and data from our surveys of people who were formerly incarcerated. The goals of this 1-hour session were to provide the students with foundational information about the incarceration system and its effects on individual health, illustrate the challenges faced by individuals who were incarcerated when they try to access healthcare, and identify ways in which to better meet the needs of this population. Through this initiative, we hope to foster a culture of inclusiveness in approaching patients while addressing some of the biases inherent to medical education.