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Dental Safety Net Patients' Reflections on Their Dental Problems and Opportunities for Care

Jenifer Euceda Nunez and Sarah E. Raskin, MPH, PhD



Introduction

Dental care and hygiene is an important but overlooked component of health in adults. Low-income and underserved populations have disproportionately more unmet oral health needs. These experiences lead to dental care having personal impacts on their lives that oftentimes can lead to personal opinions and stories. Personal perspectives can provide a new approach to oral health utilization that can further expand the limited existing literature.

Objective

To identify findings related to dental safety net patients' experiences of their oral health and dental care that are not already reflected in the literature.

Methods

Using an iterative process, we identified deductive codes from the existing literature on oral health disparities and utilization and inductive codes found within interview recordings and recording transcripts from interviews conducted among participants who obtain services at federally qualified health center (FQHC) in Richmond, Virginia (n=29). This poster explores a new theme not previously well-documented in the literature.

Figure 1

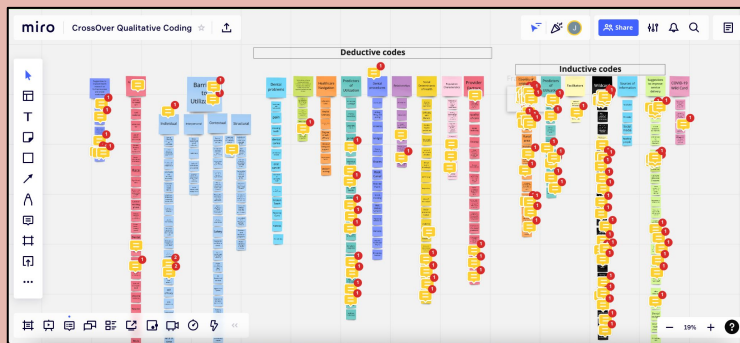
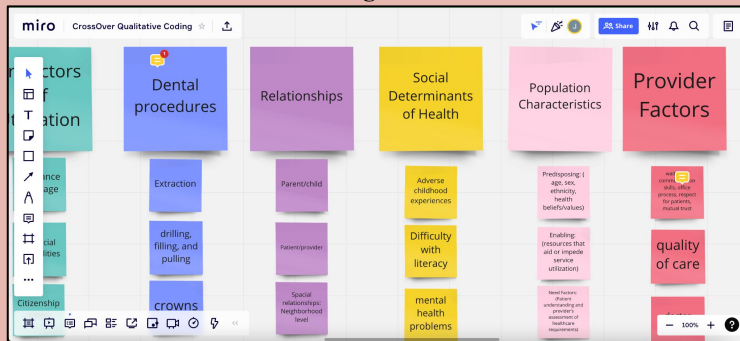


Figure 2



“Como que a caballos es lo que estan atendiendo” - Salvadoran patient

Results

Numerous Latinx patients reflected on their lifetime acceptance of dental problems, their gratitude for treatment opportunities at the FQHC, and the role that their faith has played in their oral health experiences.

Discussion

- ❑ Theories and frameworks should take into account how patients make meaning of their oral health experiences, for example through spirituality and cultural methods
- ❑ Access to dental care is limited due to patients being uninsured, difficulty making appointments, and having inflexible work schedules
- ❑ Fear was a common reason to why someone may not visit a dentist
- ❑ “It is what it is” attitudes were common among patients

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