The Impact of COVID19 on the African Immigrant and Refugee Community

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BACKGROUND

➢ African Immigrants and Refugees (AIR) face disparities in healthcare and are disproportionately affected by poverty, mass incarceration, limited health care access, and high burden of chronic diseases (Laurencin et al., 2020). The COVID19 pandemic became another reminder of these disparities.

➢ Black Americans compared to Whites, have higher rates of getting COVID19, being hospitalized due to COVID19, and experiencing death due to COVID19 (CDC, 2020).

➢ Little is known about COVID19’s impact specifically on AIR communities. This study focused on an AIR community in St. Louis and their struggle with the COVID19 pandemic.

METHODS

➢ Listening sessions were conducted via zoom with the Sierra Leonian Community in St. Louis, MO.

➢ We utilized key-informant interviews with community leaders (n=6).

➢ Interviews were recorded and transcripts were analyzed via content analysis.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

➢ This study found that the Sierra Leonian community like most minority communities have been disproportionally affected by COVID19.

➢ Mental health issues (depression, anxiety) associated with COVID19 was cited as a major concern.

➢ Lack of assistance in navigating resources to help with the burden of COVID19.

➢ Youth and young people in the community are struggling to adapt to the “new school” situation

➢ The community expressed a major need for financial, health, and educational resources to help with the negative impact of COVID19.

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Selected Quotes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Financial anxiety is one of the biggest worries because the money is no longer coming in, but we still have bills to pay. (Male participants)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navigating Resources for COVID</td>
<td>Financial help with bills. 6-7 community members are not working because their workplace shut down, some are still working but reduced hours. Community has tried to organize food donations, but they need resources and need to know where they can get these resources to give to the community. (Male participant)</td>
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<td>School Transition</td>
<td>African culture says people need to be ok, so people keep saying they are fine when you ask, but people are not fine. Truly they are worried about how they will pay rent or feed their kids. Some people rely on school to help with the kids and now the kids are home, and they are worried about who will help with the kids and if the kids are safe with who they left them with. (Female participant)</td>
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