

Abstract

INTRODUCTION: The recent COVID-19 pandemic has drawn much needed attention to some of the health disparities that have been prevalent in the United States' healthcare industry. Research shows that health disparities result in about \$93 billion in excess medical care costs and \$42 billion in lost productivity annually¹⁰. To address these issues, it is imperative to initiate discussions that can increase awareness of the historical inequities that still contribute to the current health disparities

CREATING DISCUSSIONS: Increasing awareness of a systemic problem in healthcare can lead to better understanding of patient populations and aid communities in achieving better health outcomes. A list of physical places that can be visited by future health professionals was compiled in order to help increase understanding of a large patient population in the St. Louis area, where many future health providers attend secondary education. Allowing students to see, first-hand, what many of them will never experience can increase provider understanding, empathy, and enhance the importance of patient- and community-centered care.

MAINTAINING AWARENESS: The history of Black people in St. Louis offers explanation for the presence of significant health disparities that are still existing today. More discussions on the impact of existing racial and socioeconomic separation of the city need to occur for changes to be initiated. Providing patient-centered care is taught as the standard of best practices for health care students and highlighting the ongoing problem of racial health disparities will aid in student understanding of one of the populations that they will serve in the St. Louis area.

DISCUSSION: This project should elicit a positive impact on patient-centered care offered by students who take the time to learn about health disparities in their region. All health care students should understand that each patient's situation is unique and consider their social determinants of health when providing care. Facilitating discussion of racial health disparities in the St. Louis region is imperative for understanding the poor health outcomes associated with Black communities.