

Representation of Racially Minoritized Patients on Dermatology Private Practice Websites

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Introduction

- The accessibility and quality of dermatologic care for persons of color is a subject of concern.¹
- Black people are generally less likely to visit a dermatologist than their White counterparts.²
- Dermatology websites provide pertinent information to prospective patients about the services offered at a practice.³
- Our team explored if patient imagery on private practice dermatology websites reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the metropolitan area where each practice is located.
- Inclusion of images of patients from diverse backgrounds is important for communicating inclusivity.
- Hypothesis:** Private practice dermatology websites do not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the metropolitan area where each practice is located.

Methods

- The term “dermatologist” was entered into the Google Maps scraper (Apify) to retrieve URLs for dermatology private practices in 27 U.S. metropolitan areas selected from the 2020 U.S. Census list of 100 largest areas where non-White individuals makeup more than 50% of the population.
- Homepages from the top ten websites listed by the search engine for each metropolitan area were analyzed for images, use of non-English language, and mention of “Skin of Color” or “Ethnic Skin.”
- Images of patients and providers were independently double-coded as presenting as White- or non-White to the research team (JD, MA, KH, AA).
- One-proportion t-tests were calculated to determine if the percentages of non-White patients were significantly lower than the Census-reported percentage of non-White residents per city.

Results

Table 1: Racially Minoritized Representation on Private Practice Dermatology Websites (n=97)

	Median [IQR]
Number of websites per city	3 [1, 6.75]
Number of Patients in Images per Homepage	6 [3, 12]
Number of Providers in Images per Homepage	4 [2, 8]
Number of non-White Patients in Images per Homepage	2 [1, 6]
Number of non-White Providers in Images per Homepage	1 [1, 4]
% non-White Patients in Images on Homepage	40% [20%, 50%]
% non-White Providers in Images on Homepage	50% [44%, 50%]
% non-White residents for the included metropolitan areas ⁴	53% [42%, 59%]

- Ninety-seven websites were included.
- Two mentioned “Skin of Color” or “Ethnic Skin”; six mentioned a non-English language.
- A significantly lower percentage of non-White patients ($p < 0.001$) and providers ($p = 0.022$) were pictured on the selected dermatology websites than reported in the Census (Table 1 and Figure 1).
- Our findings suggest that the images on the homepages of private practice dermatology websites were not reflective of the racial diversity of the metropolitan area in which each practice is located.

Figure 1: Website Diversity Compared to US Census

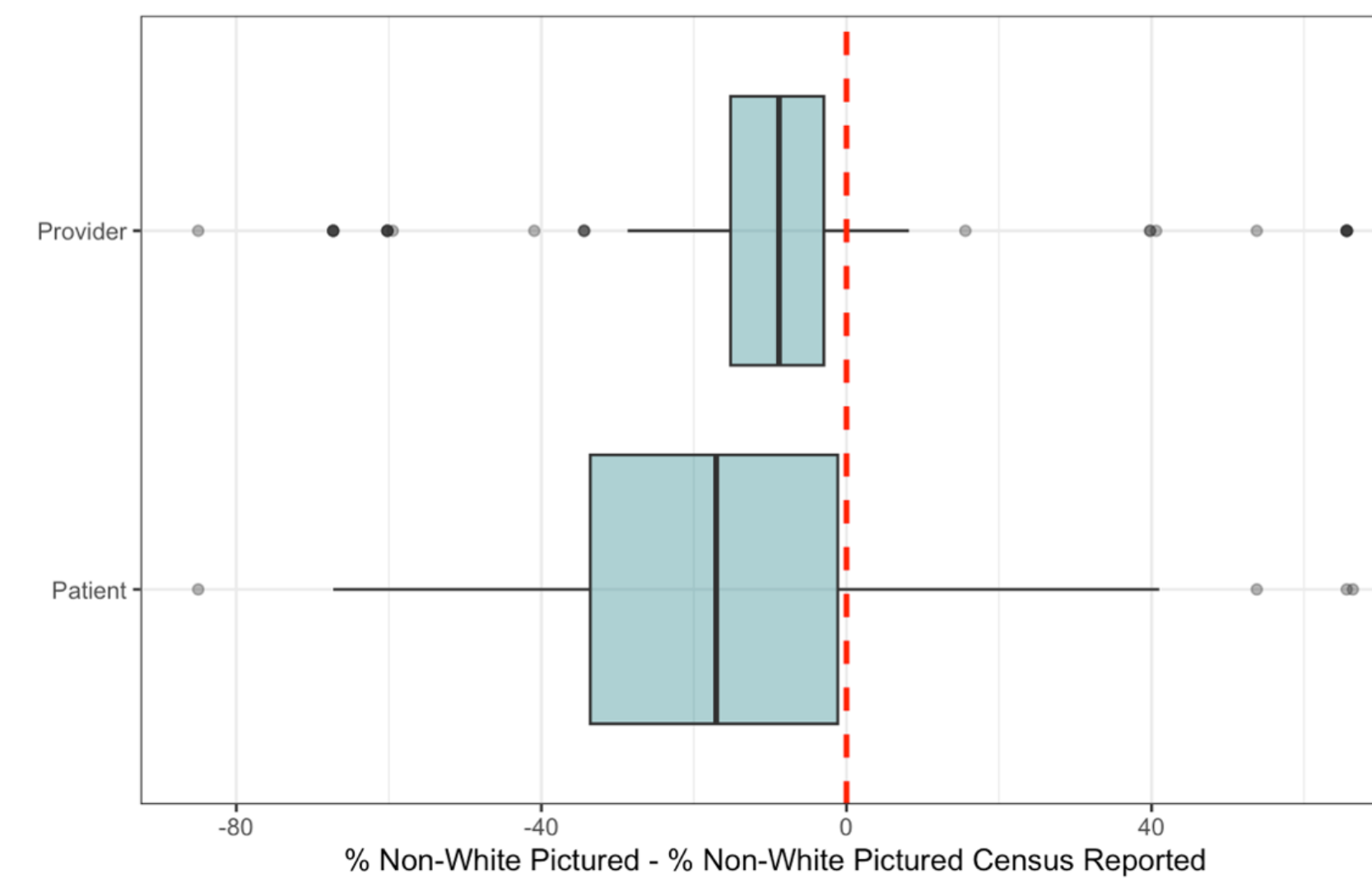


Figure 1. The distribution of the difference in the % of non-White patients and providers pictured vs non-White population in the included metropolitan areas reported by the Census. The red dotted line indicates an equal percentage pictured and census reported. The boxplots to the left of the dotted line indicate that the Census reports a higher % of non-White people compared to what is pictured on dermatology websites.

References

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Limitations

- Our study is limited by the internal biases of our coders.
- This was addressed to an extent by having multiple people of diverse backgrounds systematically and independently analyzing the website images and having a process to achieve consensus.
- This study is also limited by the exclusion of academic and venture capitalist firm-run practices, impacting study generalizability.
- We excluded academic practices because universities may restrict dermatology department websites.
- Venture capitalist firm-run dermatology practices typically had one website for practices in multiple cities and did not meet inclusion criteria.

Conclusions

- Dermatologists must become more inclusive of the communities they serve.
- The lack of representation of racially minoritized people on practice websites observed by our study may dissuade potential minoritized patients from seeking care with dermatology.
- In addition to increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the field and teaching cultural competency in residency, dermatologists should be mindful of how they represent their services online.

Disclosures

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 No conflicts of interest to disclose.