

Assessing Barriers to Care Among HIV, Substance Use Disorders, and Transgender Patients During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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BACKGROUND

- COVID-19's effects on the health of vulnerable populations (i.e. racial and ethnic minority groups) are still emerging; however, current data suggest a disproportionate burden of illness and death among groups with substance use disorders (SUD), HIV/AIDS and the transgender community.
- The widening of healthcare disparities in the setting of COVID-19, makes it important to explore the new implicit and explicit barriers faced by vulnerable populations in accessing healthcare during this time

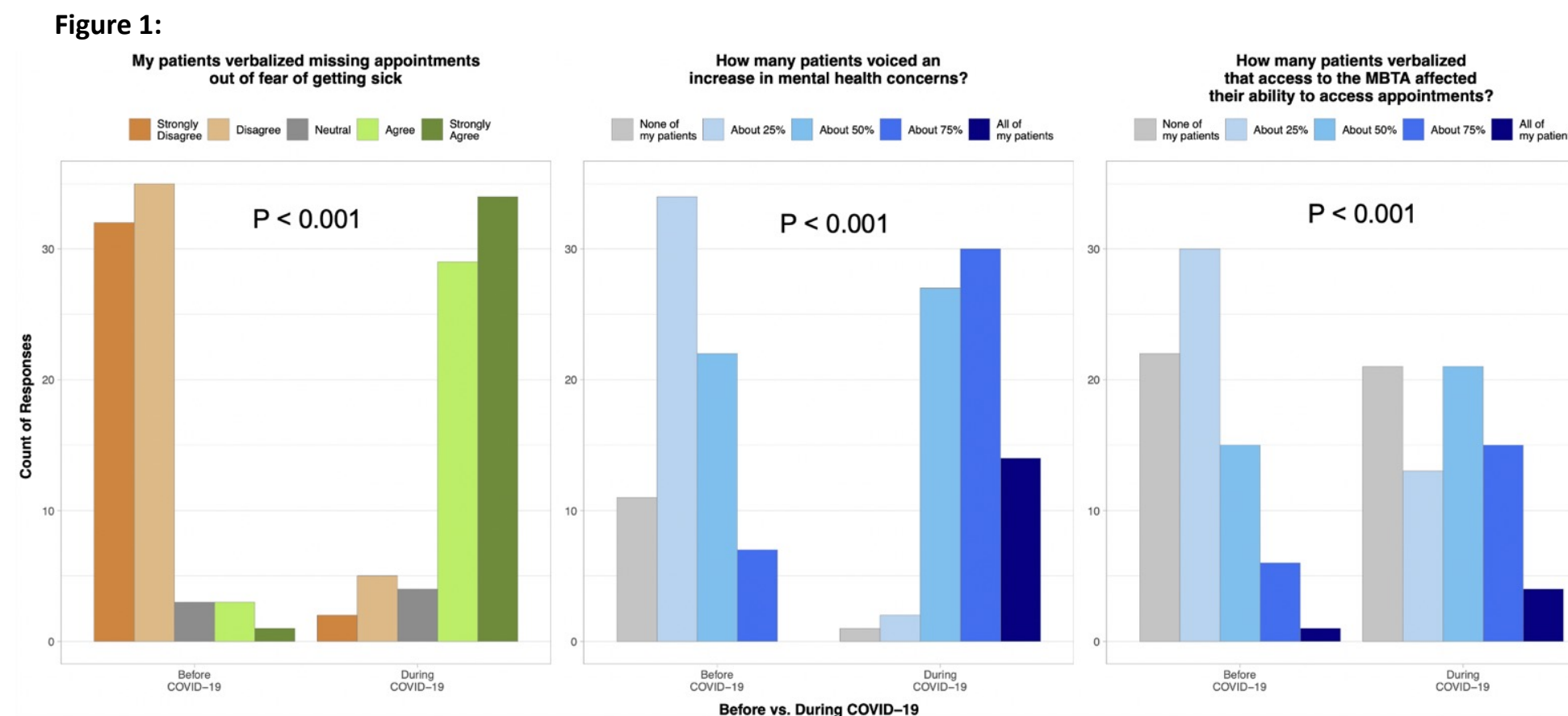
OBJECTIVES

- To explore socioeconomic barriers by surveying healthcare providers at Fenway Health about the impacts of COVID-19 on their patient's healthcare access.
- To create avenues to mitigate barriers that widen the health disparities for vulnerable patients, especially in a public health crisis.

METHODOLOGY

- IRB Exempt
- Cross-sectional pilot study
- Sample: Fenway Health Providers & Staff
- We used an online Qualtrics™ survey of 30 questions
- Measure: barriers to healthcare access among HIV, SUD, and Trans patients
 - Self-administered survey
 - Qualitative and quantitative questions
- Procedure: Survey links were sent via email
- Statistical analysis: Z-test, Fisher's exact test

RESULTS



Significant correlation with frequency of outcomes reported when comparing "before" and "during" COVID-19 (p < 0.001).

Table 1. List of Roles Held by the Survey Participants

Role	Overall (n=74)
Practitioners	44 (59.5%)
MD/DO	27 (36.5%)
NP	6 (8.1%)
PA-C	2 (2.7%)
RN	8 (10.8%)
Research Physician	1 (1.4%)
Social Workers (Therapists)	22 (29.7%)
Licensed independent clinical social worker/Licensed clinical social worker (LICSW/LCSW)	22 (29.7%)
Case Managers	5 (6.8%)
Medical Case Manager	4 (5.4%)
Violence Recovery Program (VRP) Advocate	1 (1.4%)
Patient Services	3 (4.1%)
Admin	1 (1.4%)
Patient Services	1 (1.4%)
Research Assistant	1 (1.4%)

Figure 2: Barriers Among Patients at Fenway Health

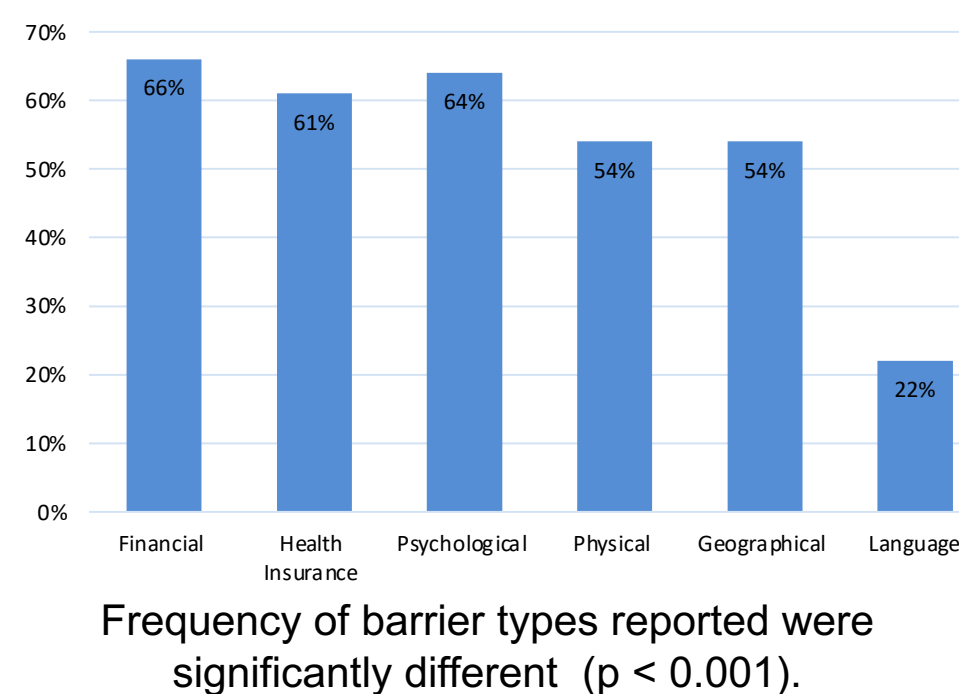


Table 2: My patients/clients are informed of the resources available to them under the CARES Act.

Strongly Disagree	15 (20.3%)
Disagree	21 (28.4%)
Unsure	31 (41.9%)
Agree	7 (9.5%)
Strongly Agree	0 (0%)

CONCLUSIONS

- Surveys indicate that efforts are needed to facilitate efficient transportation, provide mental health services, and make appointments more convenient.
- Providers report that patients have inadequate traditional education and health care literacy. These barriers prevent access to resources under the CARES Act.
- Financial barriers were the most common, language barriers were the least common.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop educational tools that Fenway Health can use to educate their patients about the CARES Act. Tools should include materials such as brochures, pamphlets, and leaflets which can be mailed/emailed
- Addition of CARES Act link to the patient portal
- Proposal to provide transportation vouchers to patients with no transportation
- Propose an increase in mental health screenings during COVID-19 & other public health crises

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