

Impact of Race Blind College Admissions on Minority Community Health

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Introduction

The Supreme Court's ruling against race-conscious college admissions in the summer of 2023 will negatively influence the opportunities for students in under-represented groups to achieve their higher education goals, which has been linked to adverse health outcomes for individuals. The reach of this decision will be broader, affecting the pipeline of students of color pursuing careers as health care providers. This will reduce the quality and experience of healthcare in under-resourced communities.

Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Decision's Impact on Higher Education

SCOTUS decision is likely to reduce underrepresented students' pursuit of health care education. The decision:

- Requires a "race blind" approach, ignoring centuries of systemic racism that has influenced higher education access (*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2023*)
- Applies nationally to all higher education institutions (undergraduate and graduate programs)
- Evidence from states that have eliminated race-conscious admissions approaches in public institutions indicates that it negatively impacts participation of under-represented students in health professions (*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2023*)

Representation of People of Color in the Healthcare Workforce

People of color are currently underrepresented in the healthcare workforce. For example,

- Currently, 13.6% of the US population is Black/African American, while 19.1% is Latiné (US Census)
- Only 5.7% of medical doctors are Black, and 2.4% are Latiné (CNN Health, 2023)
- Similarly, 10% of nurses are Black, and 4.8% are Latiné (Minority Nurse, 2016)

The pool of healthcare providers of color is small, and the Supreme Court's decision will predictably decrease the number of people of color who pursue health careers requiring higher education.

Racial Concordance and Impact on Minority Health

Health outcomes for communities of color improve when there is racial concordance (shared racial or ethnic identity between patients and providers). Racial concordance leads to

- Positive effects on chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and other illnesses (Ku et al, 2023).
- Improvement in preventative medicine, as patients are more likely to participate in diagnostic screenings (*Herto, 2020*)
- Decrease in patient mortality and an increase in average life expectancy for Black patients (Snyder et al., 2023)
- Racial concordance improves because Improved communication when patients and providers share the same language and cultural background (Alsen et al, 2018).

- Improved access to care that is the result of providers of color locating their practice in divested communities (Cantor et al, 1996).
- Increased trust and respect (Hammond et al, 2010) enhances the relationships between patients and providers can lead to shared-decision making and patient-centered approaches to providing care

Conclusion

The established connection between individual educational achievement and improved individual health outcomes will be directly affected by the Supreme Court's decision, as past evidence indicates fewer students of color will pursue higher education. Indirectly, there is very likely to be a decreased pool of available healthcare providers of color who have achieved college degrees to serve communities of color. This means the positive effects of racial concordance in health care will be reduced in communities of color, canceling gains recently made in improving life expectancy.



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