Internet Access and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Using Internet Health Resources

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BACKGROUND

• Racial/ethnic disparities in health care access and outcomes persist
• Minorities are also less likely to use Internet eHealth resources
• Potential to expand use of eHealth resources and reduce disparities through increased Internet access
• Smartphones and mobile broadband may be particularly important for minorities

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does use of eHealth resources vary by race/ethnicity?
2. Does type of Internet access relate to racial/ethnic disparities in use of eHealth resources?

DATA AND ANALYSIS

• 2015 Current Population Survey Computer and Internet Use Supplement
• Random respondent sample
• 3 eHealth uses
  • Do you research health information online, such as WebMD or similar services? (research)
  • Do you use a health monitoring service that connects to the Internet? (monitoring)
  • Do you communicate with a doctor or access health insurance records online? (communication/records)
• Descriptive statistics
• Logistic regression predicting likelihood of each measure of using eHealth resources

RESULTS SUMMARY

• Online health research is most common eHealth use, followed by communicating with doctor or accessing health records online, and lastly by Internet-connected health monitoring service
• Race/ethnicity and Internet access independently affect use of eHealth resources
• Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics have lower odds than Whites of researching health information online, and Blacks are less likely than Whites to use online communication/records access
• Having both a home and smartphone connection has a greater effect than either alone, and, aside from monitoring, home-only access has a larger impact than smartphone-only access
• Race/ethnicity by Internet access interactions are not significant
• No added benefit of smartphones and mobile broadband for minorities relative to Whites

CONCLUSION

• Racial/ethnic disparities in use of eHealth resources are not fully explained by Internet access
• Smartphone-only access has limitations
• Policymakers interested in promoting use of eHealth resources by minorities, thereby helping alleviate broader health disparities, should stress importance of home-based as well as mobile Internet access

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Percentage Using eHealth Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Communication/Records</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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REGRESSION RESULTS

Model 1: Odds Ratios, Race/Ethnicity

Model 2: Odds Ratios, Internet Access

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Notes
* Significant at the α=0.05 level
Full model includes race/ethnicity, Internet access, sex, age, education, income, and metropolitan status

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