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APHA Scientific Session and Event Listing

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Deaf older adolescents: Health care access disparities in an understudied population

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Deaf older adolescents: Health care access disparities in an understudied population

Research regarding health care for disabled and minority adolescents usually excludes deaf teens. Deaf older adolescents cannot participate in telephone surveys. Deaf teens may have more difficulty with written English than their hearing counterparts. This may impede their access to health services. We modified three nationally - normed health behavior surveys and administered the resultant survey to 168 deaf and 578 hearing incoming college freshmen. The students anonymously self-reported risk behaviors and health services use. Deaf students determined whether to provide their de-identified English reading level scores by placing a coded sticker of test information on their surveys. In general, deaf students were less likely than hearing students to report having a usual source of care in a doctor's office or clinic ($p < .0001$). They reported Emergency Department visits more frequently ($p < .05$) and were less likely to report having received counseling from providers regarding pregnancy/STD prevention ($p < .0001$), tobacco avoidance ($p = .008$) and confidentiality ($p < .001$) than were hearing students. Almost all (144 of 168, 86%) of deaf students provided reading score data. Students with lower English proficiency were least likely to report access and receipt of preventive services and a usual source of primary care. Deaf older adolescents face significant barriers to care, and those with low English proficiency have the least access. Sign language based survey instruments currently in development may make data about deaf populations more accessible; and make it easier to develop interventions to impact these disparities.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand the barriers to health information and health care access for deaf older adolescents.
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- Participants will learn differences in health services use between hearing and deaf older adolescents.

Keywords: Health Care Access, Health Disparities

Presenting author's disclosure statement:

Any relevant financial relationships? No

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