



HEALTH EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS AMONG FREE CLINIC PATIENTS

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In free clinics, patients have little to no income and will either pay none to a small fee to gain access to health services. There is a need to determine the effectiveness of free clinic patients in health education programs, patient's barriers to health and knowledge of resources. There also lacks free clinic research through qualitative approaches. A study was conducted to qualitatively examine free clinic patients perceptions and experiences of healthcare services, community resources, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This project was based on a larger study that was comprised of a multi-year collaboration with the free clinic. My involvements include distributing flyers to recruit participants, assisting and recording focus groups, transcribing the two English focus groups, and analyzing data. Along with three undergraduate students and four graduate students, I also participated in manuscript preparation. A total of 35 free clinic adult patients participated in the four focus groups (two focus groups in Spanish, two in English). Over 80% of the participants were not born in the US. Overall, reports of participant experiences with free clinic services were satisfactory. The few negative experiences participants had were due to challenges such as the long waiting times associated when making an appointment. Free clinic patients also expressed interests in having additional specialized services such as dental care and health education programming such as nutrition. While resources are limited when serving patients in a free clinic, the study has identified ways to provide better care to free clinic patients such as distributing flyers face-to-face to deliver healthrelated information.

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