

Trends in African American/Black Physician Practice Patterns in Florida

Robert G. Brooks, M.D., M.B.A.
Associate Dean for Health Affairs
Professor of Family Medicine and Rural Health

Nir Menachemi, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Associate Professor
University of Alabama – Birmingham
School of Public Health



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Background and Purpose

- Studies show that URM populations, including African Americans/Blacks (AA/B), often receive less care than non-URM populations, and often prefer to receive care from physicians of similar race/ethnicity.
- Recent years have seen renewed calls for attention to the need to formally encourage AA/B students into the health professions and support the educational pipeline for their success.
- Ongoing monitoring of rates in practice, and practice patterns of AA/B is essential to monitor/ensure successful improvement.
- Purpose of study: To identify current practice patterns of AA/B physicians in the state of Florida

Methods

- In early 2007, one-half (n= 24,840) of all allopathic physicians in Florida were surveyed as part of re-licensure (web-based or paper-based).
- Questions related to practice were developed by the Florida Department of Health and other stakeholders.
- Also utilized Florida Physician licensure database that had additional demographic information.
- For purposes of this study, we excluded:
 - physicians without a practice address in Florida (n=5,151; 23.4%)
 - residents and fellows (n=664; 4.1%)
 - those not in clinical practice (n=70; <1%)

Results: Overall

- Overall response rate of to survey was 88.7% (n=22,035).
- After exclusions, a total of 15,518 physician surveys were available for review.
- AA/B physicians (note: Black-non-Hispanic) made up 4.6% of respondents (compared to 2000 Florida census data of 15.8% of population)
- Mean age of AA/B: 47.1 years (51.5; p<0.001)*
- Female gender of AA/B: 39.7% (21.0; p<0.001)

* AA/B < 40= 23.3% (v. 14.5%); AA/B 40-49= 38.4% (v. 31.9%); AA/B 50-59= 26.8% (v. 30.7%); AA/B 60+ = 11.4% (v. 22.9%); overall chi-square p< 0.001.

Results: All AA/B Physicians

Specialty	AA/B	Non-AA/B
Fam Med	15.8%	11.2%
Int Med	19.4%	13.8%
Pediatrics	11.3%	6.2%
OB/GYN	9.1%	4.4%
ER Med	8.1%	4.6%
Med Specialties	5.6%	14.5%
Surg Specialties	8.4%	14.2%

Results: All AA/B Physicians

AA/B physicians (all)* were:

- more likely to work in counties with a higher concentration of AA/B populations (17.4% vs. 15.9%; p<0.001).
- equally likely to work in rural counties (3.5% vs. 3.3%)
- equally likely to take ER call (31.8% vs. 31.6%)
- slightly less likely to indicate intention to leave or significantly reduce practice within the next five years (10.2% vs. 12.9%; p=0.04).

* when compared to all non-AA/B physicians.

Results: AA/B Primary Care vs. Others

- Combining FM/IM/Peds/OB-GYN showed:
 - AA/B physicians – 55.6%
 - All other physicians in Florida – 35.6%
 - Primary Care AA/B physicians were:
 - more likely to practice in counties with higher AA/B populations (17.7% vs. 15.7%; $p < 0.001$)
 - more likely to practice in counties with highest percentage of AA/B populations (fourth quartile: 29.0% vs. 24.7%; $p = 0.02$).
 - less likely to practice in counties with the highest poverty rates (fourth quartile: 21.0% vs. 24.7%; $p = 0.02$).
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Results: AA/B Primary Care vs. Others

- AA/B primary care physicians were also:
 - equally likely to practice in rural areas (4.0% vs. 4.5%)
 - equally likely to cover emergency rooms (19.4% vs. 18.7%)
 - less likely to leave or reduce practice within five years (8.7% vs. 12.7%; $p = 0.02$).
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Conclusions

- AA/B physicians were substantially underrepresented overall in the physician workforce in Florida (4.6% vs. 15.8% of population).
 - AA/B physicians represent a higher percentage of primary care physicians, but lower percentage of medical and surgical subspecialists.
 - AA/B physicians appear to practice in areas of the state that have higher numbers and percentages of AA/B population, but this does not correlate necessarily with low-income areas.
 - AA/B physicians (both overall and primary care) appear to cover the ER about the same, but appear intent on remaining in practice longer, than non AA/B physicians (possibly related to younger age?).
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Policy Implications

- Concerted efforts are needed to direct AA/B students into the medical education pipeline, to facilitate their success in medical school and residencies, and to retain them in Florida to meet the needs of a growing AA/B population.
 - As of this year, the state of Florida will now require survey completion for re-licensure of all physicians, allowing us to analyze trends of AA/B students and physicians by specialty and practice characteristics over time,
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