

POLICY & PRACTICE

Demographics Affect Immunization

Single motherhood is a significant predictor in delaying the completion of the 4:3:1:3 immunization series, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health*. Only about 17% of children whose mothers had never been married had up-to-date immunizations, compared to about 75% of children whose mothers were married. The researchers used data from the 2003 National Immunization Survey, a nationwide household survey about vaccination, and verified the responses through a survey of health care providers. The study

included a sample of 11,860 children aged 19-35 months. But the researchers also found some surprises in their analysis. For example, after researchers controlled for other factors, they found that immunization completion rates were higher among children of mothers with less than 12 years of education, compared with children whose mothers had college degrees.

Disparities Seen in Children's Health

Black children are most likely to experience unhealthy conditions, according to an analysis of how children fare in 100 metropolitan

areas with the largest populations of children. The research, which was conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Center for the Advancement of Health, was supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The report showed that in 90% of metropolitan areas, the rate of low-birth-weight babies born to black mothers was more than 9%, compared with a target rate of 5% set by Healthy People 2010. In 60% of the areas evaluated, the preterm birth rate for black mothers was more than 15%. The report also evaluated segregation by neighborhoods and schools, poverty, and home ownership. The report is available online at diversitydata.org.

Citizenship Proof Slows Enrollment

New requirements that Medicaid beneficiaries show proof of citizenship is contributing to decreases in enrollment and backlogs in processing applications in several states, according to a new report from the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Beginning on July 1, 2006, individuals applying for Medicaid or seeking to renew their coverage must present proof of citizenship and identity under a provision of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. The law exempts certain groups from the requirement, including children in state foster care systems. In Iowa, state Medicaid officials reported that in the months immediately following implementation of the new documentation requirement, the state experienced the largest drop in Medicaid enrollment in the past 5 years. State officials attributed the decline to the documentation requirements and told researchers that they believed the decline was caused by eligible citizens being unable to produce documentation, not undocumented individuals leaving the program. Similar trends were reported in Louisiana, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Birth Defects Tab: \$2.6 Billion

Birth defects accounted for 139,100 hospital admissions and \$2.6 billion in treatment costs in 2004, according to a report compiled by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Heart anomalies, such as atrial and ventricular septal defects, were the deadliest and accounted for the highest number of admissions—one-third—and the highest costs, \$1.4 billion. The second-most common cause of admission was for digestive conditions such as pyloric stenosis. According to the report, between 1997 and 2004, the rate of admission increased by more than 25% for these two leading categories of birth defects, when they were listed as either the principal or coexisting condition. Genitourinary defects and nervous system anomalies accounted for the third- and fourth-leading causes of admissions, followed by other problems such as cleft palate, hip deformity, skull and facial bone defects, and spinal and foot deformities. The report can be found at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb24.pdf.

Census: Children Slightly Better Off

A new Census Bureau report finds that American children were slightly better off in 2003 than they were in 1994. The report, "A Child's Day: 2003," is the Census Bureau's third look at children's well-being and daily activities. It was based on interviews with about 10,000 parents and was extrapolated to draw conclusions on the status of 73 million children. In 2003, about 51 million children were living in two-parent households; 18% or 12.8 million lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty line. Among some changes: Parents were more likely to restrict TV viewing than in 1994. Seventy-five percent of children aged 12-17 were on track academically in 2003, compared to 69% in 1994. The report also shows that teenagers are less likely to eat with, or receive praise from, parents. Full details are available at www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/p70-109.pdf.

—From staff reports



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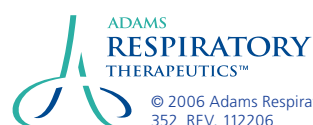
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