

Confronting inequities: A review of the literature on pharmacist practice and health care disparities

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Disparities in the provision of health care to traditionally marginalized populations have been documented in other health professions. As pharmacists' scope of practice increases, an improved understanding of pharmacists' perceptions of these populations is needed. To ensure that pharmacists' accessibility is as cognitively developed as it is spatially distributed, we conducted a scoping review of literature examining inequities in pharmacist care, including links with broader health disparities.

OBJECTIVES: To provide an overview of the literature, draw conclusions, identify gaps, and make recommendations, for future research into this topic area.

METHODS: Following Arksey and O'Malley's scoping review framework, search terms were applied to five health-sciences and pharmacy-specific database (PubMed, CINAHL, Embase, IPA, Scopus) and several grey literature databases. After systematic screening, 93 peer-reviewed and 23 grey literature articles were included.

RESULTS: Organized around core concepts (stigma, bias, disparities), extant research examining pharmacist-related dynamics in health disparities has considered pharmacists' care for those who use injection drugs, have mental illness, have limited literacy or English proficiency, and racialized groups. Although many pharmacists are providing concordant care, findings indicate deficits in pharmacists' knowledge about marginalized groups, biased, stereotypical and stigmatizing perceptions, and constrained service provision. These patterns align with those observed in health care practice, more generally.

CONCLUSIONS: This literature evidences the importance of considering and addressing patterns in pharmacists' practice with marginalized populations, particularly as pharmacist scope of practice expands. Among next steps are opportunities to expand populations considered, examine within-group differences, and attend to implicit (as well as explicit) bias.