NATION IN BRIEF

CDC: HIV care racial disparities persist

Black Americans with HIV continue to face dis- parities in care, according to a study published in the Feb. 5 issue of Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

As of 2013, black Americans accounted for 45 percent of new HIV diagnoses, even though they represent just 12 percent of the U.S. population. Using data from the National HIV Surveillance System, researchers found that among those diagnosed with HIV in 2010 and who were still living in December 2013, just 38 percent of blacks with HIV were consistently retained in care, compared with 50 percent of Hispanics with HIV and 49 percent of whites with HIV. Among blacks with HIV, 35 percent of men and 44 percent of women consistently received care for the disease.

Overall, a lower proportion of blacks with HIV were retained in HIV care during all three years studied.

“Continuing to identify barriers to HIV care engagement, including those leading to prolonged lack of retention in care, can inform the development of effective interventions to improve HIV care engagement among blacks,” the study stated. “Developing such interventions might narrow racial (and) ethnic disparities in clinical outcomes.”

New criminal justice database available

A new online inventory of nearly 10,000 criminal justice datasets and research documents from across the country is now available.

The Sunlight Foundation, a nonprofit focused on government transparency and accountability, launched the searchable data inventory in February. Known as the Hall of Justice, the database is the culmination of 18 months of gathering data from organizations such as state departments of justice, police agencies, court systems and universities.

Visitors to the first-of-its-kind database can search for information related to a wide variety of criminal justice topics, such as solitary confinement, domestic violence, human trafficking, use of police force, deaths in police custody and public legal services.

The inventory is a way to showcase potential issues with criminal justice data and highlight the need for more uniform and accessible information,” said Damion Ortellado, a research analyst at the Sunlight Foundation. “It helps us know what is missing versus what is available. In turn, this has a lot of potential to inform the current discussion on criminal justice.”


Tips From Former Smokers ads updated

The fifth year of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Tips from Former Smokers ad campaign kicked off with stories of heart disease, tooth loss, depression and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The new ads began their 20-week consecutive run in January, showing up on television, radio, billboards, online and in magazines and newspapers.

The ads are known for their emotional and personal storytelling techniques. Each ad features a real-life former smoker who is dealing with the health consequences of tobacco use.

For example, one of the new ads features Becky, an attorney from Ohio, who began smoking when she was 16. By the time she turned 45, she was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She had to quit her job, suffered a collapsed lung and is tethered to an oxygen tank.

“More than 30 courageous people have shared their stories through the tips campaign since 2012,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, in an agency news release. “The real-life stories show, in a way that statistics can’t, the suffering and disability smoking causes.”

Research has shown that the Tips From Former Smokers campaign is associated with 62 percent more people calling the national quitting, 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Since 2012, the campaign has generated more than 600,000 additional calls to the quitline. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/tips.

Sick leave tied to less emergency room use

Paid sick leave is tied with fewer emergency room visits among adults working in the private sector, according to a study published online in January in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine.

In examining data from more than 42,000 working adults included in the National Health Interview Survey, researchers found that the availability of paid sick leave is significantly associated with a lower likelihood of visiting an emergency department among both moderate and repeat users of emergency care.

Overall, private-sector workers with paid sick leave were 14 percent less likely to be moderate emergency department users, which was defined as visiting the emergency room one to three times per year, and 32 percent less likely to be repeat users, defined as using the emergency room four or more times per year.

The study noted that as of 2015, an estimated 40 million private-sector workers in the U.S. did not have access to paid sick leave. The study is the first to study the effect of paid sick leave on emergency room use following implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

“Reduction in high-cost health care utilization such as ED visits is a primary target for U.S. health care policymakers,” the study stated. “Despite improved access to health insurance, the number of ED visits in the U.S. continues to rise.”

Injuries contribute to lower life expectancy

Deaths due to injuries account for a significant portion of the life expectancy gap between the U.S. and many other high-income nations, finds a new study.

Published in February in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the study examined the three top causes of injury-related death in the U.S. — motor vehicle crashes, firearm-related injuries and drug poisonings — and their contribution to life expectancy in the U.S. and 12 comparable nations in 2012. Researchers used data from the U.S. National Vital Statistics System and the World Health Organization Mortality Database.

Overall, they found that men and women in comparison countries can expect to live about two years longer than men and women in the U.S.

Injury causes of death accounted for 48 percent of the life expectancy gap among men.

For men, firearm-related injuries accounted for 21 percent of the life expectancy gap, drug poisonings accounted for 14 percent of the gap, and motor vehicle crashes accounted for 13 percent of the gap. Among U.S. women, injury-related deaths accounted for 19 percent of the life expectancy gap, with 4 percent related to firearm injuries, 9 percent from drug poisonings and 6 percent from motor vehicle crashes.

Overall, U.S. death rates related to injuries topped injury-related death rates in all of the comparison countries. “Although the reasons for the gap in life expectancy at birth between the United States and comparable countries are complex, a substantial portion of this gap reflects just three causes of injury,” the study stated.

— Kim Krisberg

Kellogg launches new enterprise to address racial inequity, healing

A NATIONAL EFFORT to achieve racial equity has already attracted the support of dozens of diverse organizations, from the YMCA to the National Congress of American Indians to APA. Launched in January by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation enterprise hopes to build a broad coalition dedicated to acknowledging historic injustices, facilitating healing and creating opportunities for all children. The effort will adapt practices from truth and reconciliation commissions that have been tasked with resolving deeply entrenched conflict around the world.

The foundation-supported effort will adapt and implement such practices to “resolve the consequences of centuries of racism and structural inequities,” according to a news release.

The new effort will assemble national and local commissions to hold public meetings on the consequences of racial inequity and work toward more equity in opportunity. Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation also includes a media campaign, “Remix the Narrative,” to counter negative perceptions about people of color and religious groups.

For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.

— Kim Krisberg

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