Health Disparities in the Medi-Cal Population

Hypertension Management

High blood pressure (hypertension) is a common condition that increases the risk of diseases such as heart disease and stroke. In addition, recent research has shown that hypertension may be linked to some types of dementia. Risk factors for hypertension include smoking, obesity, heavy alcohol consumption, and genetics. Fortunately, many of the risk factors are modifiable, and thus people can improve their blood pressure with lifestyle changes. Medications are also very effective at controlling high blood pressure. The Let’s Get Healthy California Task Force Final Report showed that between 50% to 79% of people with high blood pressure control it successfully.

Medi-Cal claims and encounter data suggested that about 7.23% of all members had an episode of care related to hypertension between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. To identify possible disparities by race/ethnicity, the Figure below shows the percent of hypertensive Medi-Cal members adherent to four types of prescribed medications used to manage hypertension. Whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders were slightly more likely to adhere to ACE-Inhibitors, Beta-Blockers, and Calcium Channel Blockers, while Native Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders were slightly more likely to adhere to Angiotensin II Receptor Antagonists.

Figure

Medi-Cal Hypertension Patients Adherent to Prescribed Medications, by Race/Ethnicity, 2011-12

Note: Members eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid were excluded; ACE = angiotensin-converting enzyme; PI = Pacific Islander.