**Understanding patient preferences in seeking care informs actionable strategies to enhance healthcare accessibility, equity, and positive patient experiences.**

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

**Provider Preferences**
- Patients favored **language-matched providers** (81%), followed by **gender** (23%).
- **Non-white individuals** preferred same-race/ethnicity providers (21% vs. 10%).
- **LGBTQI+ respondents** preferred providers from their community (31% vs. 11%).

**Provider Importance Matrix**

**Patients highly valued:**
- Understanding discrimination faced by other patients (56%)
- Respecting sexual orientations and gender minorities (56%)
- Respecting religious/cultural beliefs (53%)

**Important Indicators of High Quality and Respectful Care**

- **Communication style** (72%) emerged as the most important factor for patients when given three choices, followed by **specialized medical skills** (55%) and **experience** (48%).
- **Communication** (26%) and **specialized medical skills** (25%) were **top choice**, with minimal variation across demographic groups.

**Major Themes of Prevention of Negative Healthcare Experiences**
- Enhance providers’ **soft skills**
- Improve **staff training**
- Increase **pay/benefits**
- Hire **more staff & increase resources**

**PROJECT DESIGN**

We conducted a survey (via email) that explored three thematic areas of patient preferences when seeking care:

- **Provider factors**
- **Environmental factors**
- **Overall patient experience and need**

Participants (n=1,323) were recruited from a pool of insured patients served by the Patient Advocate Foundation who are lower income, racially/ethnically diverse, and experienced healthcare access challenges.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**
- 28% Identified as Non-White
- 56% Female
- 30% 18 to 55 years old
- 35% Part of LGBTQIA+ Community
- 65% Medicare Insurance
- 19% Rural Location
- 56% Less than $48,000 income

**CONCLUSIONS**
- Patient decision-making is **complex**, and patients often make **decisional tradeoffs** when selecting healthcare providers based on their preferences for care and accessibility.
- While no single factor is a universal indicator for what patients seek in providers, the cruciality of “**soft skills**” to build trusting relationships was a recurring theme.
- The findings offer potential solutions to promote more positive, accessible, and equitable experiences by centering patient preferences.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Patient preferences can be used to help patients navigate the health care system when choosing a provider, facility, or understanding health information.
- It can also inform providers about what is important to patients and encourage more communication and transparency around these personal or environmental factors to support decision-making.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Visit our website to learn more about our projects, partners and engagement activities or contact:

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