Caring for Children in Immigrant Families: Are U.S. Pediatricians Prepared?

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A growing number of children in the US are from immigrant families. We conducted a national survey to examine pediatricians' self-rated preparedness to care for children in immigrant families. A 2017 survey of American Academy of Pediatrics members assessed respondent characteristics, formal training in and experience with global, public, or immigrant health, and preparedness to care for children in immigrant families. Descriptive statistics and a multivariable logistic regression model to examined associations between characteristics, formal training, experience, and preparedness. The survey response rate was 47% (n=758/1628). One third of respondents (33.6%) reported being unprepared to care for children in immigrant families. In bivariate analyses, respondents who had graduated from medical school outside of the US, had previous education on immigrant health care, or had recent international global health experience were most likely to report feeling prepared to care for children in immigrant families. Multivariable regression model results indicated that prior education on immigrant health (AOR 4.07, 95% CI 2.68, 6.32), graduation from medical school outside the US (AOR 2.35, 95% CI 1.22, 4.67), and proficiency in a language other than English (AOR 1.78, 95% CI 1.14, 2.80) were independently associated with preparedness. One in three US pediatricians report being unprepared to care for children in immigrant families. Wider implementation of graduate and continuing medical education on immigrant child health is needed to ensure that practicing pediatricians have the appropriate skills and knowledge to care for this patient population.

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