Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

The Case for Research-informed Immigrant Health Policies Within Health Care Systems

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In the last few years, US immigration policy has received increasing attention from the media, political candidates, and citizens. Within the medical community, there has been a slower but burgeoning realization that immigration policy has consequences for the practice of medicine as well as the delivery of health services. Regardless of political ideology or one's opinion about ideal immigration policies, there is increasing data indicating that immigration status is associated with health and should be considered a factor in achieving the goal of optimal health for patients and communities. For example, sentiments critical of undocumented immigration and fear of deportation have been associated with changes in health-seeking behaviors and adverse physiological effects.Given this context, health care practitioners and health systems have the opportunity to identify, address, and mitigate the negative consequences that immigration policy and sentiments critical of undocumented immigration may have on the health and well-being of immigrants.

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