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Georgia Southern Examines LHD Activities to Address Health Disparities and Inequities

January 15, 2016



Health disparities are among the critical public health challenges. A recent study led by researchers from Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University analyzed the local health departments' (LHDs) activities for addressing health disparities, changes in proportion of LHDs' performing those activities since 2005, and factors associated with variation in such engagement.

Dr. Gulzar Shah and the co-author, Mr. John Sheahan used three waves of the National Profile of LHDs Study and found that about 20 percent of LHDs did not perform any activity to address health disparities. Significant decreases occurred since 2005 in the proportion of LHDs that performed health disparity reduction/elimination activities for four of the eight activities examined in this study. LHD characteristics significantly associated ($p \leq 0.05$) with the increased likelihood of performing activities to address health disparities were: recent completion of community health assessment, community health improvement plan and agency wide strategic plan. Other significant positive impacts on such activities included per capita expenditures, local governance, having one or more local boards of health, larger population size and metropolitan status of the LHD jurisdiction.

Authors discussed the factors that may have resulted in fewer LHDs addressing health disparities in their jurisdictions, including reduced infrastructural capacity of LHDs. LHD characteristics associated with higher performance of activities for health disparity reduction identified by this research have important policy implications.

"Local Health Departments' Activities to Address Health Disparities and Inequities: Are We Moving in the Right Direction?" is published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. Full text can be accessed at: <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/13/1/44>

Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University was the lead author and Mr. John P. Sheahan was the co-author.

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