

“SUD & Structural Racism”

Study Overview

The researchers offer an overview of the history of structural racism, then discuss how structural racism creates inequities in the substance use treatment of historically marginalized communities, as evidenced by the delivery of medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and federal regulations.



Structural racism is “the system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.”

TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Opioid treatment programs (OTPs) are concentrated in neighborhoods with high concentrations of people who identify as Black and/or have Hispanic/Latinx origins.
- ✓ White individuals are more likely than individuals of other races to be treated with buprenorphine. Current studies show that the accessibility of buprenorphine and methadone at the census-tract level (counties/neighborhoods) associate significantly with racial segregation.
- ✓ A disproportionate rate of Black and Hispanic/Latinx people are behind bars because of substance use. Related to this, court officers prefer naltrexone over the other two medications as a treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) even though it is the only MOUD that does not decrease mortality risk.
- ✓ Possible solutions include lifting the regulatory hurdles limiting clinicians who prescribe buprenorphine, increasing addiction education exposure in all health professions, and increasing educational partnerships with clinicians who do not treat substance use disorder with the goal of spreading awareness about how we care for people with substance use disorder (SUD).