

# Stigma, the Hispanic/Latinx Community, & the Opioid Epidemic

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## Research Question

How do the views of future pharmacists regarding the Hispanic/Latinx community shape the racial stigmatization of the opioid crisis in New York City and affect access to opioid treatment services for this community?

## Objectives

- Understand how perspectives from future pharmacists towards the Hispanic/Latinx population play a role in the overall racial stigmatization of the opioid epidemic.
- Identify whether these views ultimately affect access to opioid treatment services for the Hispanic/Latinx community.
- Highlight the impact of COVID-19 on the opioid crisis.



## Background & Review of Literature

### *The Opioid Epidemic*

The opioid epidemic shifted from prescribed opioid medications towards the usage of heroin mixed with fentanyl or cocaine. The role of the Hispanic/Latinx community in the opioid epidemic has also shifted. Before, this population was met with harsh law enforcement policies that resulted in high criminalization and incarceration rates.<sup>1</sup> Today, the Hispanic/Latinx community represents the largest percentage of opioid overdose related-deaths in New York City (NIH 2020).

### *The Racial Stigma*

The racial stigma that has been imposed on the Hispanic/Latinx community is the result of media coverage and the imposition of social labels (Link & Phelan, 2001). The stigma towards this population has promoted a series of cognitive and systemic biases that includes the healthcare system.

### *Treatment Services*

It is still not clear what the barriers exist in access to opioid treatment services for the Hispanic/Latinx community; however, data indicate that there is a disparity of accessibility to treatment services across race and ethnicity (NIH 2020).

### *The Impact of COVID-19*

COVID-19 has also disproportionately affected the Hispanic/Latinx community. This demographic has one of the highest rates of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in the U.S. Some of the root causes for this phenomenon are institutional racism and medical racism (CDC, 2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on the opioid epidemic have also been clear: higher overdose-related deaths. Nonetheless, more research needs to be done regarding the intersectionality between the aforementioned factors. (Mendoza, et. al, 2019).

## Methodology

### *Participant Recruitment*

- The main recruitment technique used was purposeful sampling. This technique was further enhanced with the use of chain sampling.

### *Data Collection*

- In-depth interviews consisting of four sections: pharmacist's role in the opioid epidemic, stigma & the Hispanic/Latinx community, opioid use disorder treatment services, and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Short demographic survey for each participant.

### *Data Analysis*

- Thematic content analysis and the grounded theory approach.
- Responses were classified into codes, forming a codebook.
- Sub-categories, categories, and themes were built based on the relationships found in the codebook.



## Results

The following are early demographic information obtained from St. John's University pharmacy students who participated in this study (research still in progress):



- The pharmacy students who participated were in their third to sixth year of pharmacy education.

What activities/courses have you taken that introduced you to the opioid epidemic? (Select all that apply)

3 respuestas



## Discussion

- Pharmacy students gained their exposure to the opioid epidemic largely through experiential learning and an introductory public health course.
- The overuse or misuse of opioid medication can and should be prevented by pharmacists who can educate the community regarding the risks and benefits of opioid based medication.
- A potential barrier to access to opioid treatment services for the Hispanic/Latinx community is language.

## Selected References & Acknowledgements

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