

NATIONAL IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

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ACP's Mission

To enhance the quality and effectiveness of health care by fostering excellence and professionalism in the practice of medicine.

ACP's Goal III

To advocate responsible positions on individual health and on public policy relating to health care for the benefit of the public, our patients, the medical profession, and our members.

The Challenges of Immigrant Health Care

- Noncitizen immigrants and undocumented immigrants less likely to have health insurance than citizens
- Immigrants tend to be employed in low wage jobs that do not offer health insurance
- Immigrants likely to be unable to afford health services without insurance
- Legal immigrants ineligible for Medicaid for first 5 years
- 40% of noncitizen immigrants have private health insurance (60% have no access)

The Challenges of Immigrant Health Care

- Undocumented immigrants ineligible for Medicaid indefinitely
- Undocumented immigrants may delay care out of fear, eventually increasing costs due to delays in diagnosis and treatment
- Noncitizen immigrants rely on safety net facilities
 - Receive less primary care than citizens
 - Less likely to use emergency department than citizens

Call For Action – National Immigration Policy on Health Care

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- Need to have control over our borders
 - Fairness to immigrants who comply with law when addressing those who do not
 - Fairness to taxpayers
 - Obligation of hospitals to treat (EMTALA) and physicians to care for undocumented residents
 - Public health interests
 - Overall health costs
 - Health and health system consequences of deportation policies

ACP's Public Policies on Immigrant Health Care

- Access to care
- Delivery of care
- Professionalism and eliminating discrimination in health care

Access To Care

- A national issue
 - Needs to be addressed with a national policy on health care for noncitizen and undocumented immigrants
 - Individual state laws not adequate to address this and will result in a patchwork solution.
- Should not be restricted based on immigration status
 - People should not be prevented from paying out-of-pocket for health insurance coverage.

Access To Care

- U.S.-born children of parents who lack legal residency should have the same access to health coverage and government-subsidized health care as any other U.S. citizen.

Delivery Of Care

- National immigration policy should recognize public health risks associated with undocumented persons not receiving medical care because of concerns about prosecution or deportation.
 - Increased access may reduce public health costs by improving the health status and alleviating the need for costly emergency care.
 - National immigration policy should encourage all residents to obtain clinically effective vaccinations and screening for prevalent infectious diseases

Delivery Of Care

- Federal government should
 - Develop new and innovative strategies to support safety-net health care facilities.
 - Continue to help offset the costs of uncompensated care provided by these facilities and continue to support the provision of emergency services.
 - All patients should have access to appropriate outpatient care, inpatient care, and emergency services
 - Primary care workforce should be strengthened to meet the nation's health care needs.

Professionalism and Eliminating Discrimination in Health Care

- Physicians and other health care professionals have an ethical and professional obligation to care for the sick. Immigration policy should not interfere with the ethical obligation to provide care for all.
- Immigration policies should not foster discrimination against a class or category of patients in the provision of health care.

Why Does This Matter? An Example

- Immigrants with tuberculosis
 - Afraid to go to hospital for care
 - Delay in treatment exposes others to the disease, increasing exponentially
 - Increased risk of exposure to general public, immigrant and nonimmigrant
 - Access to primary care and elimination of fear of visiting hospital in the public interest

It is in the public interest to ensure that such persons are treated before experiencing symptoms and before the public is exposed to infection.

Conclusion

- Access to health care for the immigrant population is important to the overall population of the U.S.
- Immigration policy is complex – ACP is addressing immigrant health care only
- Policy must balance legitimate needs and concerns to control our borders and to fairly differentiate between those who fully comply with immigration laws and those who do not

Conclusion

- Society has a public health interest in ensuring that all resident persons have access to health care
- Policy must support physicians' ethical obligations to care for the sick and disabled without discriminating against any class of person



THANK YOU!