Community and youth violence

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSFUL MENTOR MATCHING IN AN INTERVENTION STUDY OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

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Statement of purpose One challenge of conducting intervention studies is ensuring that study participants complete the intervention. For instance, in our randomized controlled trial of Take Charge!, an emergency department-based, mentor-implemented and research-informed violence prevention program that partners with one-on-one community-based mentoring agencies, only 50% of intervention youth were successfully matched with a mentor. Understanding differences between those who complete the intervention and those who do not can further inform the implementation of future studies.

Methods/approach Between June 2014–June 2016, we recruited 188 assault-injured youth aged 10–15 years from two urban pediatric emergency departments (Baltimore, MD; Philadelphia, PA). Participants were randomized to receive an intervention that included referral to Big Brothers Big Sisters for pairing with a mentor (n=98) or a comparison group that received usual care (n=90). Of the intervention group, 49 (50.0%) youth were successfully matched with a mentor. Using descriptive statistics, t-tests and chi-square analysis, we compared matched and unmatched youth with regard to demographics, time from injury to study enrollment, perceived seriousness of injury, willingness to change, risk behaviors, and a measure of household chaos.

Results Youth who were successfully matched with a mentor were more likely to perceive the injury as very serious or somewhat serious compared with unmatched youth (95.9% vs. 79.6%, p=0.028). All other factors were not significantly associated with successful mentor matching.

Conclusions Youth perception of seriousness of injury was associated with successful mentor matching in our study population. This may be related to the youth’s motivating factors for prevention of future injury.

Health disparities and violence

HE'S NOT HELPING US, SO WE ARE NOT HELPING HIM: THE POLICE AS GATEKEEPERS TO VICTIM SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF STREET VIOLENCE

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Objective The dynamics surrounding gunshot victimizations in urban areas may not embody the typical 'good' victim/ 'bad' offender dichotomy that has been the narrative in the fields of victimology and criminal justice. The characteristics of the incident may be different, as urban gun violence often includes offenders and victims who are acquainted with each other and involve victims who may have precipitated the crime incident. Given these differing dynamics, it becomes important to better understand how the victim-first responder interaction might influence the help-seeking behavior of victims of nonfatal shootings, as first responders are considered the gatekeepers to victim support services.

Method Perceptions of victim treatment by police first responders are examined through semi-structured interviews and surveys with 14 male and female victims of urban gun violence. Qualitative analyses were used to document themes describing victim sentiments toward the police response and how characteristics of the interaction and/or perceptions of the treatment victims received might be associated with the pursuit of and access to victim services.

Results Although three very different themes emerged that captured the variation in perceptions by the victims of the police response, the majority of victims reported that they believed police held either general prejudices or specific biases directed at the victim, with many victims indicating they believed police purposely withheld information on victim characteristics of the incident may be different, as urban gun violence often includes offenders and victims who are acquainted with each other and involve victims who may have precipitated the crime incident. Given these differing dynamics, it becomes important to better understand how the victim-first responder interaction might influence the help-seeking behavior of victims of nonfatal shootings, as first responders are considered the gatekeepers to victim support services.

Conclusion Study findings that victims view the police-victim interaction as being rife with biases that limit access to victim services information suggest that police agencies could benefit from implicit bias training and reviews of victim rights policies and practices to help increase access to social, legal and support services for victims of nonfatal shootings.