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Health disparity, comorbidity, and management of patients with diabetes by the physical therapists in the United States

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Diabetes is the six most common causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States. African Americans in the United States are more likely to have diabetes-related complications and number of amputations. The purpose of this study was to: 1) To assess the utilization of outpatient services by blacks with diabetes compared with whites 2) To investigate the course of treatment leading to amputation of blacks and whites with diabetes. Data was collected through the Medicare database obtained from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Inpatient and outpatient files from the Medicare database were used to collect data on the number of hospitalizations, the length of stay, the number of discharges to skilled nursing facilities (SNF), the number of doctors' visits and number of physical therapy visits for both groups. A t-test was used to compare both groups and a Chi-Square test was used to assess the frequency of occurrence of amputation in both groups. Significant differences in the clinical management of diabetes in whites and blacks were noted. Blacks had higher number of hospitalizations than whites, longer hospital stays, higher rate of discharge to SNFs and a higher rate of amputations than their white counterparts. Outpatient visits for Physical Therapy services for blacks was significantly lower than for whites. The results of the study show that there is a health disparity in the clinical management of diabetes for blacks as compared with whites in the United States in the absence of health insurance coverage difference. The disparity in outpatient physical therapy visits needs to be further investigated. The path to the elimination of health disparity is paramount in the delivery of quality of care to all and consistent with best practice.

Biography

Anand Shetty is a Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of St. Mary. He is also the Co-Director of Research in the department. Currently he teaches anatomy, exercise physiology, and a series of research courses. He received his Doctoral degree in Physical Education from the University of Northern Colorado. He has published and presented numerous articles on obesity and a frequent invited speaker on obesity and nutrition. He has more than 25 years of teaching and research experience.

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