

Abstract

Background: There has been a recent increase in immigration worldwide that has been extremely problematic and which has helped drive forward anti-immigration sentiment in Europe and the United States. Immigrants have long faced multidimensional hurdles in receiving proper healthcare in host countries and many are believed to have been dissatisfied with the outcome. There are a multitude of diverse reasons for the dissatisfaction, not just linguistic, societal or economic barriers.

Objective: The aim of this scoping review was to synthesize research about the experiences of immigrant patients, particularly with respect to their satisfaction level with healthcare services in the countries to which they have emigrated.

Method: CENTRAL, MEDLINE, and EMBASE were searched in September 2018. The focus was on studies published in English and data comparing patient satisfaction with healthcare services among adult immigrant patients in comparison with indigenous users. A total of 2148 articles were initially assessed, of which 22 articles were determined to be suitable for analysis.

Results: Of the 22 articles, 10 showed that the level of satisfaction of immigrants was lower than that of non-immigrants, three showed a similar level, three reported a higher level of satisfaction, and four identified varying levels of satisfaction among different ethnic groups of immigrants. The contribution of demographic factors to patients' satisfaction varied depending on the individual studies.

Conclusion: Immigrant patients tended to declare lower satisfaction with their health service than non-immigrant patients. The large heterogeneity of the studies makes it difficult to specify exact factors associated with satisfaction which, in itself is an abstract concept which varies for individual to individual and which is thus almost impossible to measure accurately. However, communication is commonly identified as one of the biggest factors associated with patient satisfaction - for immigrant as well as non-immigrant patients. Language proficiency is one of the important elements of communication, and limited language skills are widely associated with lower satisfaction among immigrants.

Keywords: immigrants, patient satisfaction, healthcare, scoping review