

Improving health equity among the African ethnic minority through health system strengthening: a narrative review of the New Zealand healthcare system

Summary

Background

In New Zealand, health equity is a pressing concern and reaching disadvantaged populations has become the goal to close the inequity gap. Building and strengthening health systems is one way to secure better outcomes. However, the discourse to date has predominately focussed on inequities in health outcomes for Māori. This study has interest in the African ethnic minority community in New Zealand. It undertakes a narrative review of the New Zealand health system which aims to identify literature around the attainment of health equity of African minority by: (i) providing a critical overview of the healthcare delivery system using World Health Organization's six inter-related building blocks of health system strengthening; (ii) developing a summary and discussions of the research results and; (iii) identifying priorities and recommendations for future research.

Method

A narrative review of 27 articles published between January 2010 and June 2019 were selected from CINAHL, PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar. Grey literature also informed the review. Articles excluded studies: (i) non-related to New Zealand; (ii) with no focus on equity on ethnic minority in the delivering of healthcare; (iii) had no full text available.

Findings

Literature on Africans health outcomes were scarce regarding the six building blocks. However, findings show inequities in accessibility of health services, a non-ethnic inclusive health workforce, a leadership and governance which lack political will on migrant health and resultantly an under-performing health information system which influences resource allocation.

Recommendation and conclusion

An improvement and well-functioning health information system is pivotal to capture the unmet needs of the African population. There is a need for research and political will to invest in African minority health and diverse workforce that understands the background of the African population; and action to address structural and institutional racism and white privilege to address root causes of inadequate access and care processes for ethnic minorities.