Evaluating Access Barriers to Primary Health Care Services for Hispanic Residents in Toombs County, Georgia

by

Michele Vitale

Auburn University

SERA – IEG – 19 Health Meeting

Global Learning, Local Action

September 10-12, 2007

Atlanta, Georgia
Main Research Objectives

Objective 1. Evaluating Access Barriers to Primary Health Care Services in Toombs County, GA

Objective 2. Identify the Solutions Proposed by Hispanic Residents and Local Health Professionals
Research Method

1. **Personal Interviews with Hispanic Residents, Local Health Professionals, and Key Informants**

2. **Census 2000 Data**
   - Assessing the Economic Conditions of the Local Hispanic Community

3. **Geographic Information System (GIS)**
   - Evaluate Geographic Barriers (Distances to Health Care Facilities)
   - Identify Geographic Areas in Most Need of Health Assistance
Hispanics in the South: A New Challenge

Hispanic Immigration as a Permanent Issue

Positive Impacts on Local Economies
- Additional Employment
- Expanded Consumer / Tax Base

Financial Costs to Meet Extra and Special Needs
- Health Care as Area of Significant Concern

Necessary an Adequate Provision of Primary Care

Minorities Depend on Primary Services to Access Immediate Care

Positive Impacts on Local Economies
- Additional Employment
- Expanded Consumer / Tax Base

Financial Costs to Meet Extra and Special Needs
- Health Care as Area of Significant Concern

Necessary an Adequate Provision of Primary Care

Minorities Depend on Primary Services to Access Immediate Care
Percent Change, 1990 to 2000
Hispanic or Latino Origin
All Races
The Study Region: Toombs County, GA

Significant Hispanic Population Growth
- 2,310 Hispanic Residents in 2000
- 180.3% Increase between 1990/2000

High Demand for Hispanic Labor
- Farm Workers
- Clothing Factories
- Construction
- Poultry Plants
- Landscaping Shops
- Groceries
- Restaurants

Significant Hispanic Population Growth
- 2,310 Hispanic Residents in 2000
- 180.3% Increase between 1990/2000
Dimensions of Access to Health Care

- Availability
- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Acceptability
- Accommodation

Availability

Shortage of Primary Care Services

Toombs County, GA

Significant Number of Uninsured Residents

High Number of Emergency Visits

Medically Underserved Area (MUA)

Primary Medical Specialties Most Required

Mental Physicians

General Practice Doctors
Hispanics tend to locate in the most rural and remote areas of the county. The hospital and most of the private physicians are located in Vidalia.

Hispanics tend to locate in the most rural and remote areas of the county.

Accessibility

Great Geographic Distances
Geographic Area Where Live The Poorest Hispanic Residents

Southernmost Census Tract

Geographic Area Where Latinos Most Need Primary Health Assistance
Accessibility
Long Travel Time

Length of Time for Hispanic Respondents to Reach Their Usual Sources of Care

Source: Primary Data
Accessibility

Absence of Public Transportation

Only 2 Counties Out of 16 Have a Public Transportation System

Southeast Georgia Health District

The complete absence of a public transportation system affects most those minorities that lack of private means of transportation.
Accessibility

Hispanics are Less Likely to Own a Car

Mode of Transportation of Hispanic Respondents to Reach Their Usual Sources of Care

Source: Primary Data
### Per Capita Income in 1999 ($) by Race in Toombs County, GA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Toombs County</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>17,130</td>
<td>24,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11,982</td>
<td>20,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8,364</td>
<td>14,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>6,034</td>
<td>12,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2,487</td>
<td>17,341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000
Affordability

Lack of Health Insurance

Health Insurance Coverage of Hispanic Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uninsured</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Health Insurance</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
Affordability

Serious Economic Consequences

Economic Problems Caused to Hispanic Respondents by Illnesses or Injuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Problem</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never had Problems</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debts for Paying Medical Bills</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Job</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
Accommodation Difficulties Experienced by Hispanic Respondents When Seeking Health Care

- **Doctors do not speak Spanish**: 67.5%
- **I have to wait too long for an appointment**: 20%
- **Practice hours not convenient**: 10%
- **I am not sure what services are available to me**: 2.5%

Source: Primary Data
Accommodation
Private Physicians Hesitate to Accept Hispanic Clients

Hispanic Patients Lack of Health Insurance

Hispanic Patients Lack of English Proficiency

Private Physicians Tend To Consider The Accommodation of Hispanic Patients As a Time-consuming and Costly Process

Hispanics Have To Prove Their Ability to Pay the Medical Bills (Paying in Cash)

Hispanics Have To Provide Their Own Interpreters (Relatives, Friends)
Acceptability

Existence of Discriminations

Mistreatments Experienced by Hispanic Respondents When Receiving Health Care

Source: Primary Data
Hispanics Rely on Public Health Facilities

Usual Sources of Care of Hispanic Respondents

Source: Primary Data
Hispanics` Recommendation

Solutions Proposed by Hispanic Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Staff</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-cost Insurance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheaper Services</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Health Clinic</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Visa Check</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Rides</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
Hiring Qualified Medical Interpreters and Hispanic Doctors

Bilingual Psychiatrists and Psychologists

Increase The Availability of Affordable Care

Support Physicians Willing to Provide Discounted Health Services Based on Family Income

Establish a Community Health Center Located in Toombs County

- Hispanic Doctors and Nurses
- Discount Medical Plans and Medications
- Convenient Clinic Hours
- Emergency Low-cost Dial-a-ride Services

Health Professionals` Recommendations