Highly Educated Young Blacks Reluctant to Access Mental Health Care

February 28, 2012

Feelings of shame, mistrust of doctors, plus interactions with caregivers who lack cultural understanding are some reasons why well-educated young African-American adults are much less likely than their white peers to seek mental health services, according to a study published in the journal Psychological Services and reported by HealthDay News.

For the study, researchers at Michigan State University examined data from more than 11,000 U.S. residents, ages 13 to 26, in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill conducted the original study.)

Past research has shown that people with higher education levels are more likely to seek out and receive mental health services, but the Michigan study found that this trend was not consistent across the races. “While that may be true for whites,” the researchers write, “it appears the opposite is true for young adult blacks.”

This study’s findings also reinforced previous findings that show blacks receive lower quality care when they access mental health related services and often report unpleasant experiences after receiving care.

“Practitioners need to address the concerns of black clients in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner,” said Clifford L. Broman, PhD, a sociology professor at the university and the study’s author. “And during exit interviews, they should ask what is appropriate and what didn’t work.”

But it’s not just young people who struggle to get good treatment for mental disorders; older African Americans also face some of the same mental health disparities. Click here to read more.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.