



Few Healthcare Resources for Poor People

By Karah Lindsey

Poor people do not often have a lot of resources, financial or otherwise. Combine that with healthcare providers that are often a long car or bus ride away and the result is poor people dying 10-15 years earlier than their counterparts that do not live below the poverty line.

Imagine you live in Imperial, California, which is in a county with a 23.8% poverty rate. You make less than \$20,000 a year, and suddenly, one day you wake up with a massive headache and chills. Luckily, it's your day off of work so you have time to visit a doctor. You're very thankful because if you were sick on a work day, you would have to make the decision between working while ill or sacrificing income that you need to pay for food to visit the doctor. The closest low-cost clinic is 15 miles away, located in a homeless shelter. There are a couple closer, but they do not offer care based on income. There also used to be one less than a mile from your home that offered free transportation, but it could not stay open due to financial difficulties. You felt safer going to that clinic because the risk of your stuff being stolen was not as high, but this clinic is your only viable option.

You don't have access to a car, so you take the bus. That also means potentially spreading your illness to others. The bus takes 10 minutes to get to you, and an hour and a half to get to the nearest station to the doctor's office. It takes you 10 additional minutes to walk to the office, all while you are covered in sweat and shaking. All told it takes you nearly two hours of miserable travel before you even get to see a person that might help you recover. When you get there, you can check in using your photo ID, but often times people don't have photo ID. You take a moment to be thankful for your ID. Then, you are told that all of the doctors are busy, and it is going to be an hour and a half before a doctor can see you. The next closest healthcare provider is another hour and a half bus ride away, so you're only option is to sit shaking in that waiting room.

As you can see, getting healthcare that you can afford when you are poor is a monumental task that no one should have to complete. The providers do their best to stay open, but it's difficult because they either have financial pressures if they are run by a for-profit company or are always scrounging for resources if they are run by a non-profit. This is where we can all step up and make sure that everyone has access to the healthcare they need. Research nonprofit hospitals and donate to them. Encourage politicians to work to lower healthcare costs and help hospitals stay open.

Works Cited

1. *Compare Poverty Rate Among California Counties*, 2020, www.welfareinfo.org/poverty-rate/california/compare-counties-interactive.
2. Dickman, Sam. "Inequality and the Health-Care System in the USA." *The Lancet*, 8 Apr. 2017, [www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30398-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30398-7/fulltext).