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Reproductive Injustice and the Black Maternal Mortality Crisis

The black maternal mortality crisis is one of the most significant social health crises in the US. Black women are more likely to die in pregnancy than white women, despite modern medicine. The crisis cannot be attributed just to income, education, or lifestyle. It shows how racism within healthcare and society is a significant factor in women's lives. The influence of culture, power, and inequality on health can be disclosed with the help of anthropology, which studies the trends. Structural inequality contributes to the medical and obstetric racism behind the Black maternal mortality crisis, and anthropology offers a priceless perspective on understanding how to clarify and eliminate the disparities in health care provision.

Black Maternal Mortality Crisis

The Black maternal mortality crisis defines the situation of high morbidity and mortality of Black women during pregnancy, childbirth, or shortly after childbirth. According to Taylor's study, the rate of death among black women is twice or thrice that of whites (506). Even females who are insured and more educated still experience the inequalities. According to Howell, the majority of deaths of mothers, 46% black and 33% white women can become avoidable due to quality care and prompt action (8). It is not individual behavior but rather systemic bias.

Anthropology placed more emphasis on teaching that health is shaped by social and cultural conditions rather than biology. Black maternal death demonstrates the influence of social

institutions and race disparity on care (Davis 2). Anthropology links the trends to more profound cultural structures of inequality that are destructive of women across generations.

Medical and Obstetric Racism

Medical racism occurs when bias is applied to diagnosis, treatment, and communication with patients. The emergence of gynecology had historically involved medical experiments on enslaved Black women without their consent (Taylor 507). The malpractices left a trail of distrust that continues to influence healthcare to date. Numerous Black women document being dismissed when outlining symptoms, revealing that racial prejudice still influences medical encounters (Davis 6).

Obstetric racism is a type of medical racism that arises in pregnancy and childbirth. Davis describes it as the combination of racial prejudice and obstetric violence when females are not heard, their suffering is downplayed, or when their consent is rejected (Davis 2). Physicians can think that black women are used to more pain or are overstating their pain. The trends are not singular but belong to a bigger culture of devaluing the experiences of Black women,

The Social Causes Behind the Crisis

The causes of the crisis are structural racism, poverty, and persistent stress. Policies, institutions, and practices of structural racism result in disparate access to resources and healthcare (Taylor 512). The researchers discovered that housing, education, and income have a strong influence on maternal health (Wang 908). The compounds, along with racism, increase the risk in Black women.

The concept of constant exposure to racism undermining the body over time is presented by Forde et al. as the weathering hypothesis (1). Young and healthy Black women can also have pregnancy complications that are common to older white women. It is a manifestation of

inequality being physically embodied in the body. Anthropology assists in understanding that racism has quantifiable health consequences, and discrimination is not merely social, but it is biological.

Racism in Today's Healthcare Systems

Healthcare-based racism may be either direct or indirect. Certain women experience direct discrimination, whereas others experience microaggressions such as being hurriedly rushed or disregarded. Post et al. discovered that Black women who almost died during labor were ignored after they complained of pain (42). A lot were well insured and educated, and it shows that racism cuts across the lines.

As Howell observed, Black women tend to give birth in hospitals with decreased resources and lower quality (Howell 5). It shows the greater context of racial segregation in societies. Alhalel et al. asserted that pre-term births and infant mortality are 50% more common in black women and have increased to 3% by 2024 (2). Some patients felt condescended and practitioners recognized they had not been trained to deal with race issues. The findings imply that racism is not individual, but institutional in nature, as it affects policies, staffing, and trust.

How Racism Produces Unequal Reproductive Outcomes

Racism also affects health through stress, bias, and access to care. Discrimination produces chronic stress, which brings about high blood pressure and premature delivery (Howell 3). Implicit bias may delay diagnosis and entail making bad decisions. Black women may also find survival difficult in pregnancy due to structural limitations, such as poor-quality facilities and supportive services.

Stress affects reproduction even in nature. Researchers have found that whales were less successful at giving birth in polluted, noisy surroundings because of the interference of stress-

related hormones. Thus, racism is a form of environmental pollutant that effects all stages of health related to pregnancy (Howell 7). Black women were often blamed for complications and left to bear the brunt alone (Post et al. 43). The firsthand accounting shows one of the visceral aspects of how healthcare racism can be a matter of life and death.

Anthropology's Role in Understanding and Changing Healthcare

Anthropology reveals the different living conditions of inequity and the special systems that sustain those live inequality systems like the health care system. The study of Davis is devoted to the voices of Black women who become victims of obstetric racism (Davis 2). The research illustrates how culture and history affect medical practice. Anthropology challenges the concept of medicine as an objective phenomenon because it shows how race and gender social beliefs influence care.

Anthropology also helps in developing solutions. It links policy and culture to foster community-based care and build trust. Programs that employ the use of doulas, midwives, patient advocates, and those involving the same racial or cultural groups improve the outcomes and trust (Alhalel et al. 2). The interdisciplinary perspective of Anthropology, encompassing biology, culture, and social situation, plays a crucial role in managing health inequities.

Anthropological concepts such as reflexivity, which denotes the awareness of being biased, are also crucial. By realizing the influence of culture and power on medical practice, healthcare professionals can be more aware of inequity in their own practice.

Reducing Racial Disparities

Health care workers must learn about their personal racial biases and where they show up in their behaviors. Howell says the hospitals must track the outcomes of their races and hold their staff accountable for results (Howell 8). Wang emphasized that provision of resources like

housing and food problems must be dealt with to reduce the disparities in healthcare (Wang 908). The Policies must provide funds for care that is culturally inclusive so that patients feel safe and respected for who they are.

Equity is no longer just avoiding death. It is about dignity and trust. Anthropology asserts it through its inference of empathy and inclusiveness in every quality of health care. It is hearing, respecting, valuing, not disregarding the voices of patients, plus knowing the background, so that sustainable changes occur.

Conclusion

The maternal mortality crisis among Black women reveals the ways racism is still determining life and death in America. It indicates medical and obstetric racism, social inequities and structural barriers that harm Black women. The asymmetrical impact of racism represents stress, discrimination, and access to care. Anthropology is the science that discerns the dynamics of the forces and points the way for remedial action. The area of health and medicine can become more equitable and human through policy practices of cultural knowledge, changing policies, and community care. The answer to the crisis lies not only in medical reforms but in cultural change.

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