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## Exploring Political Awareness and Civic Engagement Among Women Utilizing MATER Services

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# Exploring Political Awareness and Civic Engagement Among Women Utilizing MATER

Cathy Lu, Meghan Gannon, PhD, MSPH\*

# Introduction & Objective

- Civic engagement is a key issue under the Healthy People 2020 Social Determinants of Health
  - Both crucial in sustaining democratic integrity and linked with better health
- Marginalized communities are more likely to face barriers to voting
  - Health organizations—esp. community health centers and safety net hospitals—can help overcome these barriers

# Introduction & Objective

- MATER (TJU OB/GYN)
  - Mindfulness and person-centered approach to care and parenting intervention
  - Medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder
- Women in drug treatment
  - Largely on public assistance
  - Are greatly impacted by legislators/legislation
- This qualitative analysis will be the first one of its kind to assess voter registration status among women utilizing maternal drug treatment services

# Aims & Hypothesis

- This qualitative analysis aims to:
  - Assess the degree of political awareness and civic engagement among women utilizing MATER services
- Hypothesis
  - Women utilizing MATER services will report barriers to civic engagement related to issues such as lack of information, transportation, childcare

# Methods

- Population
  - Women utilizing MATER services
- Data source and collection methods
  - Survey administered by phone following verbal consent obtained over the phone
    - COVID prevented survey from being conducted in person
  - Convenience sampling used to enroll participants

# Methods

- Main predictors & outcomes
  - Demographic information (age, race, ethnicity, employment, education)
  - Public assistance (WIC, SNAP)
  - Source of voting information
  - Voting history and political engagement
    - Perceived barriers (prior conviction, childcare, knowing where to go)
  - Reason for not voting
  - Interest in future advocacy

# Methods

- Analysis
  - Prior: data cleaning and exploratory data analyses
  - Standard descriptive statistics used to describe demographic information and opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment characteristics
  - Frequencies used to calculate categorical variables and mean/standard deviations for continuous variables

# Results

- Final sample size 31
- 48% reported previous voting history
- Most common reason for not voting: Not being registered (41%)
- Second most common: Not being interested in the election (29%)
- 77% of participants reported no interest in future advocacy
- Most participants cited lack of information, transportation, and childcare as barriers; however, these were not the most prevalent ultimate reasons for not voting

# Results

Survey item	% reported
Utilization of public assistance	100
Top source of voting information	
Social network	48
Social media	28
Interest in future advocacy	
No	77
Yes	13
Unsure	10
Reason for not voting	
Not registered	41
Not interested	29

# Conclusions

- Impact on target population
  - Understanding of what is needed to increase civic engagement
  - Sociopolitical empowerment
  - More effective democracy
- Limitations
  - Virtual survey due to COVID
  - Improvement: face-to-face encounter to enhance depth of communication
- Next steps
  - Help participants get registered to vote
  - Figure out how to increase interest in elections and future advocacy

# Disclosures and Acknowledgements

- No disclosures
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# References

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