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Understanding Endometriosis Diagnostic and Treatment Delays: Implications for Future Public Policy

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Abstract

Endometriosis, a chronic gynecological condition, affects approximately 190 million women worldwide. Despite its high prevalence and substantial impact on one's quality of life, endometriosis research remains underfunded, leading to substantial knowledge gaps, ongoing stigma, undertreatment, and underdiagnoses. Research suggests that this issue partly arises from the long-standing neglect of women's reproductive health and menstrual care. Using a mixed-methods approach, combining recent public health data alongside patient-reported experiences, this paper identifies gaps in timely diagnosis, treatment disparities, and differences in outcomes among women with endometriosis, particularly focusing on factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and location. Findings reveal that women from disadvantaged groups face greater challenges in accessing adequate healthcare due to increasing stigma and research gaps. Thus, this study sheds light on the underlying factors that serve as obstacles for improved endometriosis diagnosis and treatment, suggesting the presence of significant research gaps and systemic barriers. This paper concludes by emphasizing the urgent need for healthcare reforms and policies aimed at improving equity in care for women with endometriosis.

Keywords: Disparities; Gender; Healthcare; Stigma; Inequity