

Exploring the Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Access to Preventive Healthcare Services in Bolivia

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Access to preventive healthcare is an important component of public health and population health. In Bolivia, the healthcare system is stratified, with differences in access to resources and services based on socioeconomic status, geographic location, ethnicity, and other social determinants of health. These disparities particularly affect low-income and Indigenous populations and contribute to inequities in health outcomes. This project examined how socioeconomic status influences access to preventive healthcare services in Bolivia by integrating field observations with existing literature. The project was conducted during participation in the Child Family Health International (CFHI) Global Health Program in Tarija, Bolivia. Observations from clinical rotations and community visits were compared with research on Bolivia's healthcare system, health inequalities, and the effects of ethnicity, gender, income, and geographic location on healthcare access. A social determinants of health framework was used to examine how social and structural conditions influence access to care. Field experiences and the literature demonstrated that financial limitations, transportation barriers, geographic isolation, and unequal distribution of healthcare resources reduce access to preventive services. Rural and Indigenous communities experienced greater barriers to timely care, with disparities particularly affecting chronic disease prevention and maternal and child health. These findings highlight the importance of addressing social and structural determinants of health through equitable resource allocation and culturally responsive care. Understanding healthcare stratification and its effects on vulnerable populations may help inform public health strategies aimed at reducing health disparities and strengthening Bolivia's healthcare system.