

Investigating the Impact of Stigma and Dehumanization on the Healthcare Engagement and Access of Unhoused Individuals: A Photo-elicitation Study



Neha Shetty (COL24)¹, Brynn MacGowen², Laura Sinko PhD, MSHP, RN³ & Anne Teitelman PhD, MSN⁴

1) University of Pennsylvania College of Arts and Sciences 2) Pennsylvania State University 3) Department of Nursing, Temple University College of Public Health 4) University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

01 Background & Significance

People experiencing homelessness (PEH) face difficult challenges when advocating for their health needs. These challenges can range from structural to interpersonal, impacting the quality of care these communities are able to receive as well as their future willingness to engage with medical spaces.

Furthermore, patient-provider relationships that are impacted by the discrimination, stigma and alienation that unhoused communities face on a daily basis have a negative causative effect on self-reported desire to seek care.

A critical gap that exists within this field of research are qualitative studies on the perception of PEH regarding their own unmet medical needs and the barriers they face. While photography has been used to document the experiences of unhoused communities, few methods have allowed unhoused individuals to be behind the camera, choosing what images should be used to drive the discussion around their experiences.

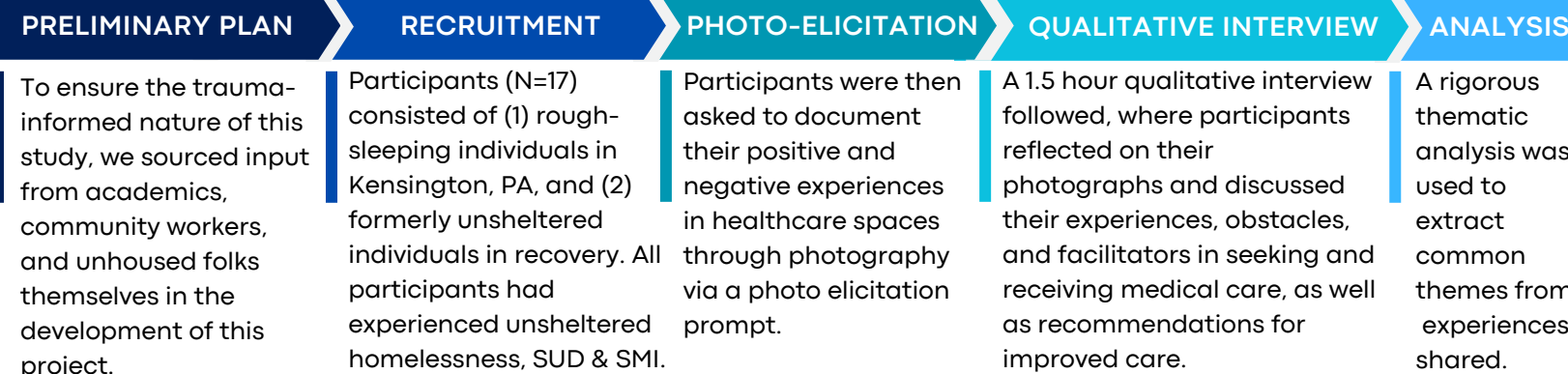
02 Objectives

Explore the positive and negative experiences of unhoused patients as they navigate healthcare settings.

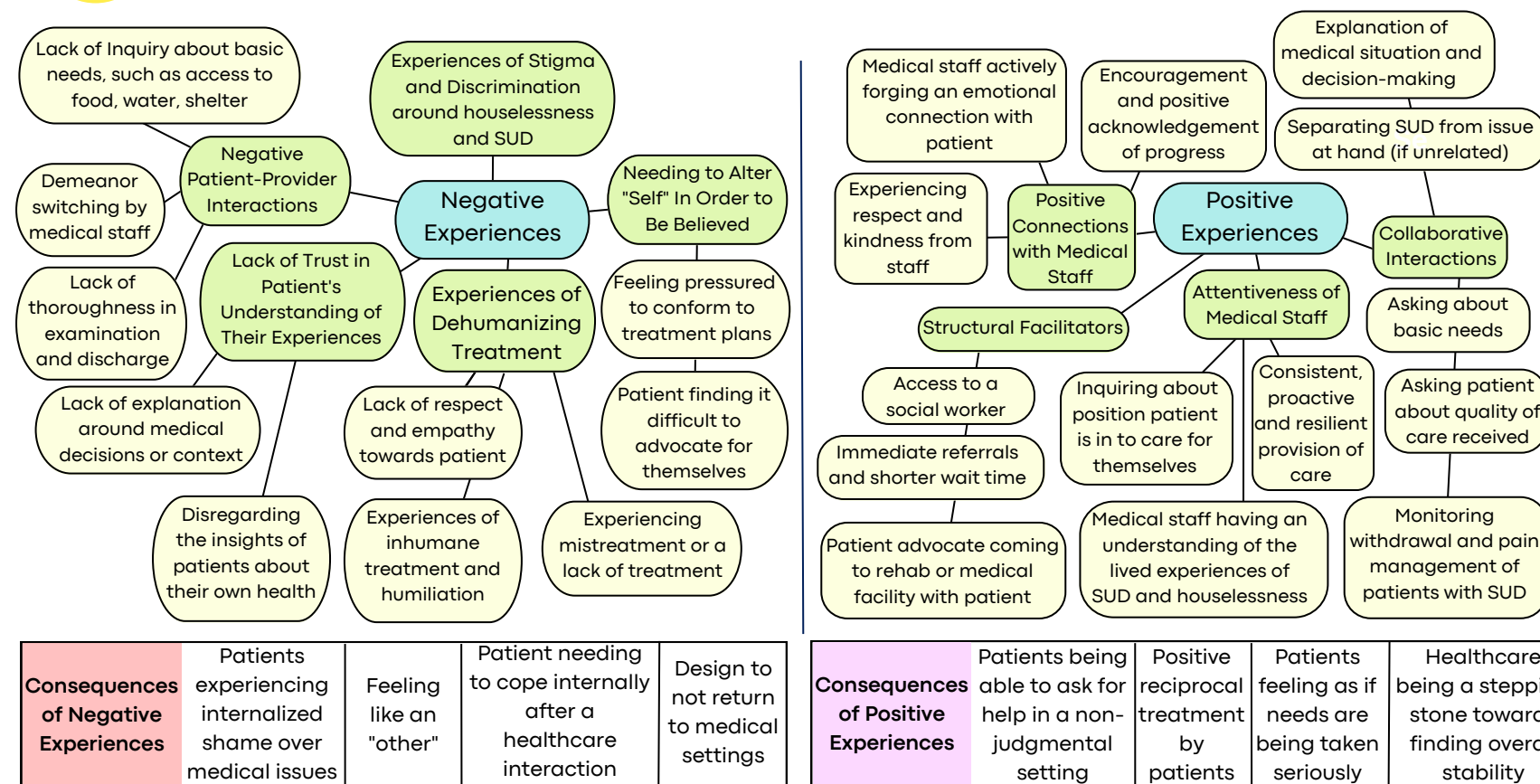
Source recommendations from PEH to on how to facilitate successful physical and mental health outcomes for PEH.

Identify opportunities and frameworks to positively engage unhoused individuals in healthcare spaces.

03 Study Design



04 Principal Findings



05 Conclusions

Two conclusions were sourced: (1) PEH experienced a variety of dehumanizing experiences within healthcare settings, which were exacerbated by their own experiences with homelessness, addiction, and societal barriers that prevented them from accessing healthcare. (2) Participants appreciated the trauma-informed nature of this novel research approach, emphasizing that it allowed them to regain their autonomy in representing their experiences through research.

06 Implications for Practice

- Due to high utilization of healthcare services by PEH, ensuring that the services provided are high quality and trauma-informed is incredibly important in promoting health-seeking behavior.
- There is a critical need for (1) anti-bias and compassion training in spaces that PEH inhabit and (2) improved discharge processes, including connecting PEH to social and medical services.
- Future research should continue to engage PEH by integrating aspects of this novel, community-engaged approach to ensure trauma-informed data gathering.

07 Acknowledgments

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Contact: nshetty@sas.upenn.edu, laura.sinko@temple.edu