Research Poster
COVID-19 Mortality Disparities Among Native Americans Across the US

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Introduction
• The COVID-19 pandemic has affected communities all across the United States. While some politicians initially called it the ‘Great Equalizer,’ it has become increasingly clear that disadvantaged and marginalized communities are at much higher risks of contracting COVID-19 and ultimately dying from it.
• Native American communities have been especially affected, however there is limited literature exploring deeply why this disparity exists.

Objective of the Study
• To determine whether Native Americans are more likely to die of COVID-19 than Whites on both a state and national level, as well as examine why these differentials in mortality risk exist.

Methods
• The methods for this project were primarily quantitative. CDC data was used to calculate Risk Mortality Ratios (RMRs). Other national data collection sources, including the American Community Survey, The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and general US Census data were used to analyze factors that could explain the observed elevated mortality, such as pre-existing conditions or reservation status.
• I worked alongside Professor Goldman, as well as Fumiya Uchikoshi, a sociology graduate student. I decided on the topic, and did a large amount of research, including collecting background on Native Americans, gathering data on variables to explain the elevated mortality and drafted the majority of the paper. It was a very collaborative effort!

Results
• Native Americans were 3x more likely than Whites to die of COVID-19, based off age and place standardized RMR’s. The comparison group was non-Hispanic whites.
• The Native American RMR was higher than both that for Blacks and Latinos.

Discussion
• It is clear Native Americans are at a significantly increased risk of dying due to COVID-19 than Whites across the US. Reservation status appears to play a role in increasing that risk. A higher prevalence of pre-existing conditions, as well as state policy response differentials likely also contribute to elevated mortality among AIAN communities.
• Data on Native American communities is very limited, which makes it difficult to find important data to probe these important questions. Increased data surveillance and collection is needed.

Questions
• How do social factors or patterns drive the spread of COVID-19 in Native American communities? Why are reservations hotspots of COVID-19 given the vast distance that exists between households?

Conclusion
• Native Americans have been differentially affected across the country by COVID-19. Improved data collection is necessary. Reservation status, as well as pre-existing conditions appear to at least partially explain the difference in mortality risk.

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