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COVID-19 Response and the Unhoused Communities in Sacramento: A Mixed Methods Study

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Publication Date

2021

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are not available for this reason: N/A

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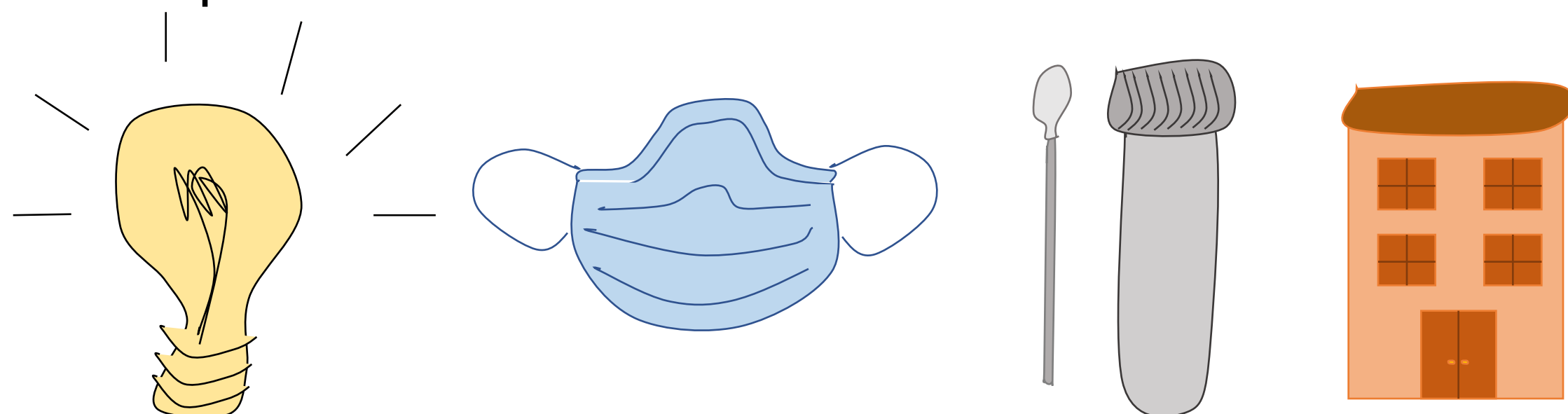
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Introduction

- People experiencing homelessness (PEH) are a vulnerable population during the COVID-19 pandemic due to preexisting comorbidities, transience, and distrust of the medical system.
- Prior work has demonstrated that The Housing First (HF) model has led to more stable housing, increased outpatient treatment and primary care physician (PCP) visits, and fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations.
- During the COVID-19 emergency response, hotel rooms across California were re-purposed to house PEH.
- The Encampment Med Team, a group of volunteer medical students sworn in as Disaster Service Workers, employed a grassroots approach through routine site visits to encampment and street sites in Sacramento.



Objectives

- Assess the impact of the disaster response on PEH in Sacramento.
- Assess priorities and highlight the lived experience of PEH during the pandemic.
- Quantitative hypothesis: hotel placement will increase PCP visits
- Inform Health in All Policies



Methods

Mixed methods

“Outside PEH” | “Hotel PEH”

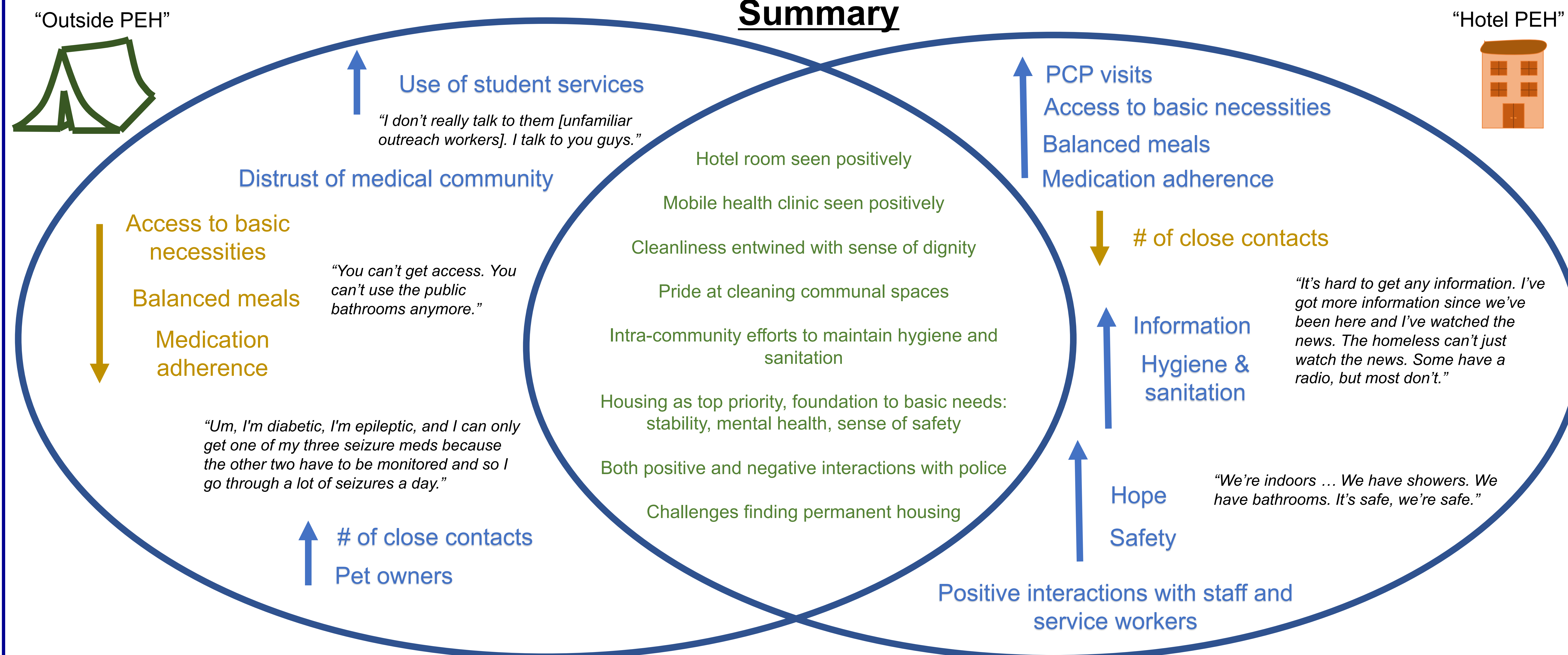
Quantitative: surveys
n = 100 | n = 100

Qualitative: interviews
n = 18 | n = 17

Team-based

Team Name	# Researchers
Literature Review	10
Field Research	14
Remote Research	21
Policy	10
Quantitative	11
Qualitative - coding	14
Qualitative – theme analysis	8
Writing	3

Summary



Conclusions

- Emergency hotel placements during the disaster response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased access to healthcare, information, resources, hygiene and sanitation, as well as an increased sense of hope and safety for PEH in Sacramento.
- Despite being a more transient population, PEH living outside and in temporary hotel placements highly valued a sense of community and saw sanitation as a community action, entwined with dignity and responsibility to contribute to community wellness.
- A grassroots approach and team-based approach to the emergency response by volunteer medical students helped build trust with PEH, suggesting that a mobile health unit would increase access to care.
- Housing is a top priority, and stronger programs should exist to bridge from temporary hotel placements to more permanent housing.

Results

Quantitative:

Multivariable models of reported primary care physician (PCP) visits in the past year and reported medication adherence

Outcome	PCP Visits n = 200	Medication Adherence n = 131
Variables	Incidence Rate Ratio	Odds Ratio
Location		
Outside PEH	Ref.	Ref.
Hotel PEH	2.16 (1.08-4.36)*	2.60 (1.21-5.56)*
Age	1.01 (0.98-1.04)	1.01 (0.98-1.05)
Sex		
Male	Ref.	
Female	0.74 (0.36-1.51)	1.21 (0.56-2.64)
Comorbidity Index ¹	1.09 (0.82-1.45)	1.48 (1.05-2.09)*

PEH = Person/People Experiencing Homelessness; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
¹ Modified version of Charlson's Comorbidity Index

Qualitative:

Themes	Subthemes
Access to Resources in the Environment	• Information • Sanitation
Social Connection as Empowerment	• Sanitation as a Community Action • Trust with Providers
Exacerbation of Pre-Existing Conditions	• Chronic Health Conditions
Impact of Systems & Policy on Safety	• Sweeps • Barriers to Housing • Housing Access

The Encampment Med Research Team

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Acknowledgements

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>Hotel Visits</i>
Julie Field
Debbie Martinez | <i>Disaster Service Worker Mentors</i>
Olivia Kasirye
Kevin E. Mackey
Scott Perryman |
| <i>Street Clinic</i>
MK Orsulak
Niki Jones | <i>Volunteer Medical Students</i>
Hiwote Shawargga
Kelsey Hideshima
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| <i>Qualitative Advice</i>
Joy Melnikow
Melissa Goddin | <i>Community Activism</i>
Crystal Sanchez |