

Liana Petruzzi, LCSW

Research Statement

As a social work researcher, my research is directly informed by my practice in healthcare and hospital settings over the past 10 years. Through these clinical and research experiences, I witnessed how social determinants of health impacted the daily lives of the clients and communities I worked with, such as people with disabilities. Most recently, I was a medical social worker at a non-profit hospital, and helped patients navigating the healthcare system through an interdisciplinary care management program. This clinical experience showed me the significant impact that social factors such as insurance status, income and zip code have on health outcomes and quality of life. This position also required a comprehensive understanding of healthcare systems and policies, which directly impact access to health insurance and health services.

My research is grounded in the role that social work can play in addressing social determinants of health, reducing racial and economic health disparities in the United States, as well as advocating for improved healthcare policies. This is particularly relevant during the pandemic, a public health crisis that has continued to wreak havoc on marginalized communities, particularly the Latinx community in Austin. My dissertation focuses on an intervention with community health workers (CHWs) for Spanish speaking patients who have been hospitalized with COVID-19, with a particular focus on the psychosocial experience of patients and CHWs. To this end, we have submitted a grant to secure additional funding for a social worker in order to increase access to behavioral health support for a predominantly Spanish speaking patient population. Additionally, I will be moderating a panel at the Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Sciences, which focuses on integrating CHWs into population health interventions.

My focus as a health equity researcher has been multifaceted. Throughout my career, I have utilized both qualitative and quantitative analyses to better understand health disparities and I consider myself a mixed method researcher. I have trained in advanced statistical methods such as hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) and conducted secondary data analysis with large national datasets such as the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. Specifically, I focused on racial and economic disparities in access to healthcare among women of color. This project led to multiple conference presentations as well as a publication in *Ethnicity & Health*. I have also been engaged in community based participatory research (CBPR) with Dr. Carmen Valdez in the Population Health department at Dell Medical School. For example, we created a six session, CBPR seminar series for the Population Health Department, which I co-organized and co-facilitated. Additionally, I have worked closely with Dr. Barbara Jones, the chair of the inaugural Department of Health

Liana Petruzzi, LCSW

Research Statement

Social Work at UT Health Austin, on integrated healthcare delivery and social work efficacy in healthcare settings as well as interdisciplinary health education. We have published about the importance of including social work within interdisciplinary healthcare education, as well as presented at CSWE about the role that social work can play in centering diversity, equity and inclusion in healthcare education.

As a health equity researcher at a Tier 1 institution, I will bring my clinical and research skills to an academic hospital setting in order to develop and implement programs that foster health equity in the local community. More specifically, I will focus on incorporating interdisciplinary care interventions in healthcare settings that include social works and community workers. I will seek federal funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Association of Health Research & Quality as well as local funding similar to the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. I will pursue post-doctoral positions as well as tenure track teaching positions in social work, public health, or health equity departments across the country. I look forward to teaching and mentoring social work students, particularly those interested in the healthcare field.