

Intersecting inequities in health and disease management: the experiences of racialized immigrants in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Research in the global north consistently documents the existence of a 'healthy immigrant effect' (HIE) wherein recent immigrants are found to be healthier, as measured by chronic conditions, higher life expectancy, and lower morbidity than their long-term immigrant and native-born counterparts. While research highlights the inequitable burden of COVID-19 among immigrants, little is known about the differential impacts of the pandemic within and between immigrant groups, or the potential synergistic effects of the pandemic on intersecting forms of health inequities among immigrant populations. Drawing on a large mixed method research project with racialized immigrants in Ontario's Peel Region –a region known as one of the most demographically diverse and major COVID-19 hotspots in Canada –this presentation examines COVID-19 variations within and between immigrant groups, and the underlying determinants driving disparities. In contrast to the HIE, our findings indicate recent immigrants have higher rates of COVID-19 yet lower COVID-19 vaccine rates, while long-term immigrants have lower rates of COVID-19 and higher vaccine rates, suggesting the HIE may have limited applicability to infectious disease. Delving deeper into immigrant group variations, we show how institutionally engrained inequities in Canada's immigration system intersect with regional legacies of neglect to recalibrate new forms of inequities among immigrants, permanent residents, temporary residents, and refugee groups that co-produce differential opportunities for health, labour, and social welfare needed for health and disease management. We close with a discussion on key knowledge to action gaps and highlight suggestions for health policy and practice.

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