

# Exploring Street Medicine's Acceptability: A Qualitative Study of Team Member Perspectives



## INTRODUCTION

- Street medicine offers a more inclusive approach for individuals excluded from the traditional healthcare system. Unhoused individuals are known to have a higher risk of negative health outcomes. (1,2,3)
- Unhoused individuals have about 30 years less of lifespan compared to their housed counterparts, and less than 10% of them have access to a primary care physician. (4)
- There have been limited qualitative studies exploring providers' perceptions of barriers and acceptability of the street medicine model.
- One aim is to explore street medicine providers' perceptions of barriers and facilitators to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness (PEUHs) use of street medicine services.

## METHODS

- Eight semi-structured interviews were completed with street medicine providers from October 2024 through February 2025.
- Street medicine members were recruited from the California Street Medicine Collaborative and sent flyer information.
- Eligibility criteria: (1) 18 or older, (2) member of a street medicine team, and (3) English speaking.
- Semi-structured interview questions were adapted based on the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability model (TFA).
- All interviews were conducted via Zoom.
- All interviews were recorded and transcribed.
- Two coders conducted a thematic analysis to examine and interpret the transcripts.

## RESULTS

Table 1: Examples of Identified Themes (3) with Quotes

Rapport building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "She could not do anything that would make us not want to come back and help".</li><li>• "The relationships we have are genuine. It does not feel manufactured".</li></ul>
Adjusting clinical care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "The goal of the first encounter is to get a second encounter. That tends to be counterintuitive to the modern American medical system".</li><li>• "These people need vaccines. Trying to figure out how to treat someone properly out there is hard".</li></ul>
Limitations to care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transportation is the biggest barrier and specialty care as well'.</li><li>• "I will say, we can only go so far with women's health...we have not found a feasible way to do pelvic exams out there".</li></ul>
Overall Acceptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We can do a lot, which I am proud of".</li><li>• Being able to create new job positions...and help those who need it has been cool, so I consider that's a win".</li></ul>

### Descriptive Results

- 2 MDs, 1 DO, 2 NPs, 2 MSWs, and 1 Program Director
- 4 Males, 4 Females
- 4 practicing in Bakersfield, 1 in Lake Isabella, 1 in Fresno, 1 in San Fernando, and 1 in Contra Costa County

Participants **overwhelmingly perceived street medicine to be an acceptable model** for service delivery with unhoused populations and advocated for its expansion.

## CONCLUSION

- **The street medicine model is highly acceptable among street medicine team members** despite any issues related to burden or opportunity costs.
- **Expanding the street medicine model requires enhancing the capacity for healthcare delivery in nontraditional settings** and fostering greater collaboration between healthcare providers, social services, and community organizations to address the broader social determinants of health among the unhoused.
- Given its potential to improve the health and well-being of this medically vulnerable population, further investment and policy **support for the expansion of street medicine programs is strongly warranted.**
- Due to the small sample size and qualitative studies not generally intending to produce generalizable results created some barriers to representativeness and diversity.

## AUTHORS & DISCLOSURES

1. Presleigh Beshirs, MSW student, California State University, Bakersfield: Nothing to Disclose
2. Ashleigh Herrera, PhD, MSW, LCSW, Assistant Professor, Social Work, California State University, Bakersfield: Nothing to Disclose

## REFERENCES

1. Tito E. (2023). Street Medicine: Barrier Considerations for Healthcare Providers in the U.S. *Cureus*, 15(5), e38761. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.38761>
2. Withers, J. (2011). Street Medicine: An Example of Reality-based Health Care. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 22(1), 1-4. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2011.0025>
3. Carmichael, C., Schiffler, T., Smith, L. et al. Barriers and facilitators to health care access for people experiencing homelessness in four European countries: an exploratory qualitative study. *Int J Equity Health* 22, 206 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-023-02011-4>
4. Stefanowicz, M., Feldman, B., & Robinson, J. (2021). House Calls Without Walls: Street Medicine Delivers Primary Care to Unsheltered Persons Experiencing Homelessness. *Annals of family medicine*, 19(1), 84. <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2639>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the Student Research Scholars Program at California State University, Bakersfield, for the opportunity and support to expand student's academic development and competencies. Thank you to the dedicated street medicine providers for your unwavering commitment to the populations served and willingness to share your insights. Thank you to Dr. Ashleigh Herrera for your mentorship, guidance, and support throughout this study.

# Resources

- Overall Design Recommendations:
  - <https://biorender.com/blog/top-5-tips-for-designing-a-scientific-poster>
  - <https://guides.nyu.edu/posters>
  - <http://www.personal.psu.edu/drs18/postershow/>
- Specific Design Tools:
  - Icons: <https://thenounproject.com>
  - Free Stock Photos: <https://unsplash.com/>
  - Color Palette Picker (if you don't want to use ASAM's): <https://colors.co/>
  - QR Code Generator: <https://www.qr-code-generator.com/>
- Printing (ASAM has not independently verified the quality of these printers)
  - <https://www.posterpresentations.com/>
  - <https://scientificposterprinting.com/>
  - <https://www.uptime.com/large-format-posters-printing.html>
  - <https://www.makesigns.com/products/scientific-posters>
  - <https://www.megaprint.com/research-posters.php>