

## "What kind of medicine is that?"

# Understanding the Gaps in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Virtual Engagement Methods for African Immigrants

African immigrants are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and experiencing severe health-related symptoms. COVID-19 caused healthcare facilities to adopt virtual telehealth platforms, but many lacked the strategies to support access to and use of telehealth services. Our research increased the capacity of African-led organizations to document the experiences of African immigrants in utilizing virtual platform methods and develop patient-centered recommendations to address the gaps in culturally and linguistically appropriate virtual telehealth methods.

## Methods



271 survey respondents



271 observation assessments



42 focus group participants



61 palava hut\* participants

\*A traditional Liberian conflict resolution method

## Survey Participants



59%

identified as female



11-20

years spent in the U.S.

the majority were



20-39

years old

all were between



18-89

years old

## Top 5 origin countries

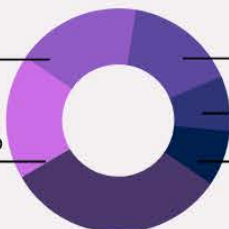
Liberia, 18%

DRC, 16%

Nigeria, 8%

Somalia, 18%

Uganda, 8%



29

different first languages spoken at home

hello أهلا  
Bwakeye Agoo  
habari habari  
bonjour  
hayé olá  
Aw ni ce gye bale ko  
nnoo.

## Use of Technology & Telehealth

# 80%

of participants had an internet connection and/or smartphone



Frequently used apps:  
Facetime, Zoom, WhatsApp

### Desired top 5 qualities for using telehealth

- Ease of Use
- Connectivity
- Clarity
- Audio
- Video



[H]e emphasized the surgery had to be done for me to be better but just the way he had engaged me and treated me made me feel he had better intentions for my knee, unlike the other one...



## Trust in Healthcare Provider

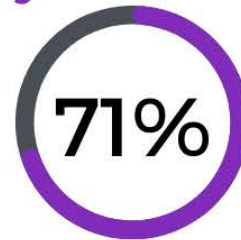
# 85%

of participants had a high level of trust and confidence in western medicine

## Health Literacy



# VS



of participants with a regular PCP found it easier to say they did not understand them

of participants without a regular PCP

## Language Barriers

# 79%

of participants with a language barrier when using technology were more likely to be unfamiliar with telehealth



...seeing your provider online doesn't work because we don't have the language skills and the technology skills, we don't zoom, and no one came to us and showed us how to use it.



Our Partners:

## 8 Areas of Recommendations

1

**Virtual Platforms:** Address health and computer literacy barriers by researching the feasibility of integrating commonly used virtual platforms, such as WhatsApp, for telemedicine and standardizing the platform across healthcare systems.

2

**Culturally Responsive Research:** Partner and directly fund African-led organizations, as well as hire African immigrants, to lead culturally and linguistically appropriate research plans – from determining research questions that matter to them to disseminating findings.

3

**System Capacity:** African immigrants distrust the U.S. healthcare system due to abuses experienced in the U.S. and on the continent. Thus, there is a need to examine the intersection of racism and discrimination based on being an immigrant – xenophobia, language oppression, nativism, ethnocentrism - and its impact on African immigrants' engagement in healthcare.

4

**Trust:** Prioritize culturally-informed strategies for providers and researchers that acknowledge and value the role of trust, and builds trust between providers and African immigrant patients by promoting confidentiality and safety.

5

**Language Justice:** Establish comprehensive language justice programs within health and social services that include a short-form language proficiency assessment, as well as the integration of African dialects into translation and interpretation services.

6

**Capacity Building for African-led Organizations / CBOs:** Build capacity and development programs to improve practice, policy, and research that addresses health inequities for African immigrants prioritizing the leadership of African-led organizations and African immigrants.

7

**Health Literacy:** Implement a comprehensive health literacy plan that educates African immigrants to better understand telehealth and other health-related terms in order to make appropriate health decisions, and equips health care providers with the tools needed to improve communication with African immigrants.

8

**Interpreter and Translation Services:** Develop national, state and local interpreter and translation service standards that include African dialects, and integrate cultural brokers to overcome issues related to language discordance.