Depressive Symptoms and Depression Literacy Among Korean Americans

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Depression alone accounts for 4.3% of the global burden of disease and is among the largest single causes of disability worldwide (11% of all years lived with disability globally). However, depression has been still not well-understood by health professionals, patients, and the public in general particularly with regards to etiology, signs and symptoms, and treatment of depression. Treatment or need for treatment of depression may be under-recognized due to poor depression literacy. There is a paucity of research on mental health literacy of AAs including Korean Americans (KAs) and consequently the reports of the prevalence and health outcomes of low depression literacy in AAs is extremely limited. This study investigated the prevalence of depressive symptoms among Korean Americans (KAs), and its association with depression literacy and their socio-demographic characteristics. A sample of community-residing 681 KAs living in New York City and New Jersey completed the survey utilizing the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Depression Literacy Scale, and socio-demographic inventories. Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlations, and simple regression analyses were conducted to assess the association between depressive symptoms, depression health literacy and the covariates. The findings indicated that 45% of the participants showed elevated depressive symptoms measured by the critical cut-off score of 16 on the CES-D. After controlling for age and gender, the other 6 variables; education, perceived physical and mental health, English proficiency, use of English and depression literacy explained an additional 23% of the variance in depressive symptoms (F [8, 632] = 24.362, p < .001). Furthermore, education (B = -.146, p < .001), perceived mental health (B = .191, p < .001), English proficiency (B = -.085, p < .01), use of English (B = .096, p < .001), and depression literacy (B = -.206, p < .05) were significant predictors of depressive symptoms in this model. The outcomes of this study indicated that there was a high prevalence of depression among the KAs, and also English proficiency and depression literacy were found to be closely related to depressive symptoms among KAs. Finding ways to reduce the effects of limited English proficiency and depression literacy on depressive symptom outcomes among KAs warrants the attention of policymakers, clinicians, and other stakeholders.

**Title:**
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**Keywords:**
Depression, Depression Literacy and Korean Americans

**References:**

Abstract Summary:
This study investigated the prevalence of depressive symptoms among Korean Americans (KAs) and its association with depression literacy and their socio-demographic characteristics. Overall, there was a high prevalence of depression among the KAs, and English proficiency and depression literacy were found to be closely related to depressive symptoms among KAs.

Content Outline:
Depression is considered to be one of the most frequent mental disorders in the US population (Baumeister & Harter, 2007), and depression literacy is a specific type that varies among populations. Especially many Asian Americans (AAs) who view depressive symptoms as a sign of weakness or lack of discipline and willpower (Leong & Lau, 2001); they tend not to accept the medical model of depression (Karasz, 2005).

This study investigated the prevalence of depressive symptoms among Korean Americans (KAs) and its association with depression literacy and their socio-demographic characteristics. A sample of community-residing 681 KAs living in New York City and New Jersey completed the survey utilizing the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Depression Literacy Scale, and socio-demographic inventories. Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlations, and simple regression analyses were conducted to assess the association between depressive symptoms, depression health literacy and the covariates. The findings indicated that 45% of the participants showed elevated depressive symptoms measured by the critical cut-off score of 16 on the CES-D, and education, perceived mental health, English proficiency, use of English and depression literacy were significant predictors of depressive symptoms. Overall, there was a high prevalence of depression among the KAs, and English proficiency and depression literacy were found to be closely related to depressive symptoms among KAs.

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