Depression Screening as a Service Learning Activity in Community Health Nursing

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One World Outreach

Service Learning-Defined

"Service-learning means a method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully-organized service that:

- is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility;

- is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and

- includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience."

(American Association for Higher Education Series: Service-Learning in the Disciplines, 1997)

Service-Learning for Nursing Education

- Nursing has a long history of service-learning, although not overtly recognized as such
- Benefits the community and academic institution
- Help to broaden vision beyond traditional hospital arena
- Can help provide services to communities in need

Need for Study

- Tested the feasibility of incorporating a depression screening tool within the usual health care context of a free community-based primary health clinic serving primarily Latino immigrants in a large southwestern city

- Integrating service learning into baccalaureate nursing course in a structured manner

PHQ-9

- Patient Health Questionnaire 9 Item
- Assesses symptoms and functional impairment over past 2 weeks
- Can be used for diagnosing and monitoring
- 9 items related to symptoms
- One global item related to function
- Results reported as total score

Methods

- Service learning event involved nursing students screening low income Latino patients for depression using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and a brief demographic survey at a free clinic in a large southwestern metropolitan area

- IRB approved study

- Patients were screened before seeing the medical provider by nursing students trained in the use of the PHQ-9 and supervised by nursing faculty.
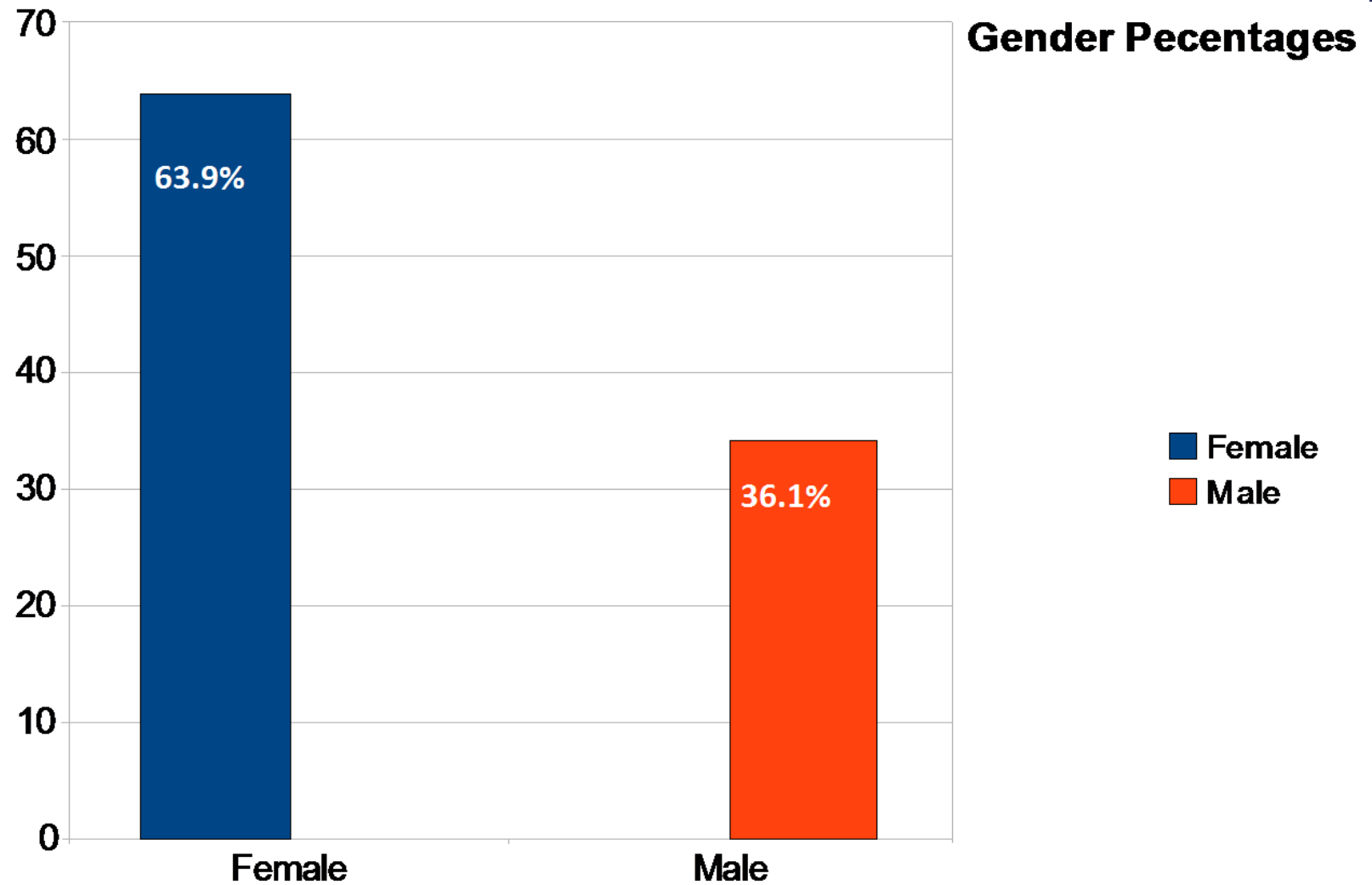
Data Analysis

- Each of the completed participant's PHQ-9 data was entered into SPSS for analysis

- Statistical procedures performed include frequencies and percentages and total PHQ-9 scores

Patient Sample

- 83 participants

- Latino sample

- Participants sought care at free community based clinic in large southwestern USA metropolitan area
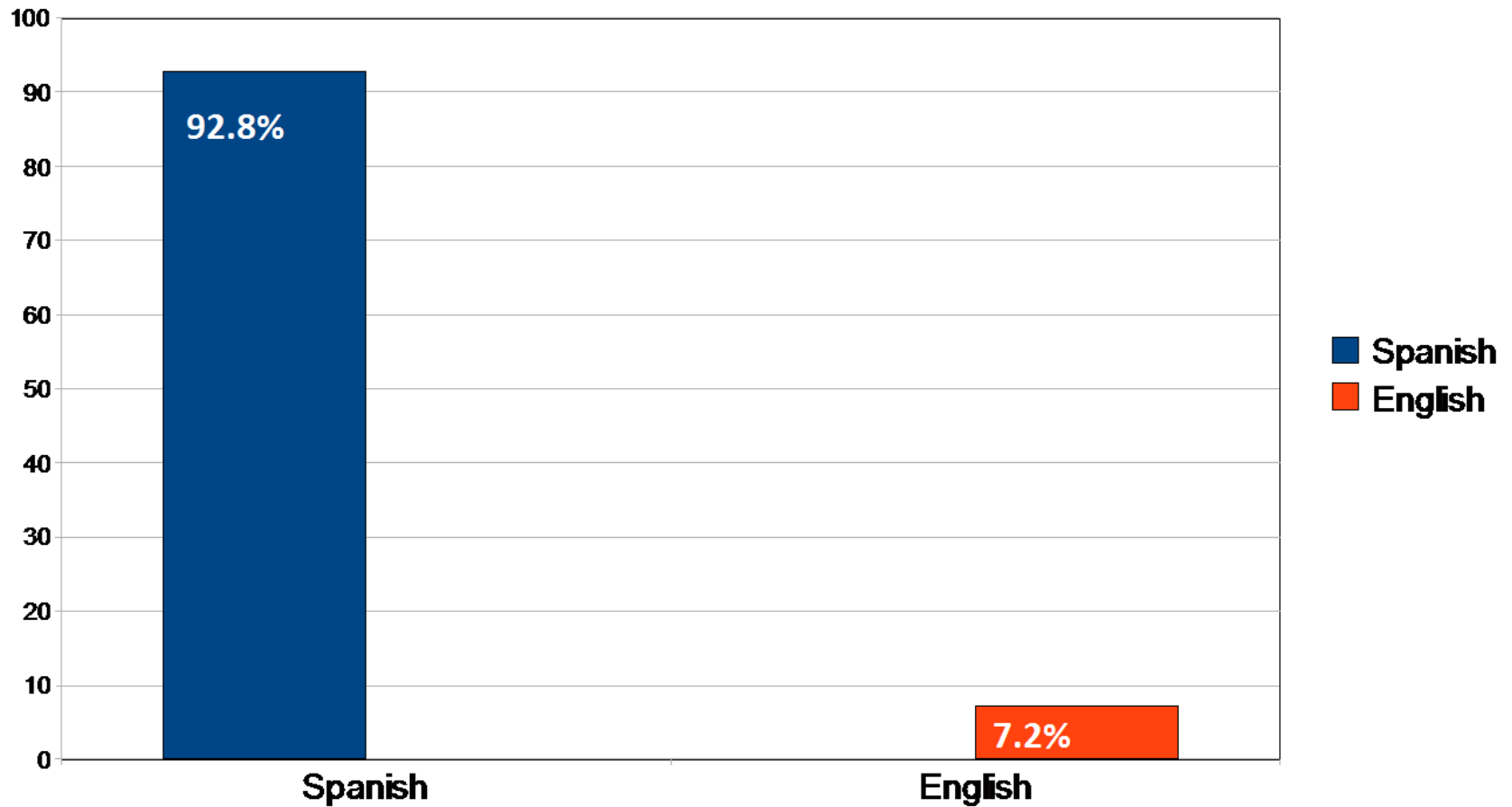
Sample Gender

Sample Primary Language

Primary Language Percentages

Other Sample Demographics

- Average age of 42.5 years old
- Average participant had been in the United States for 13.4 years
- Primary reason for visiting the clinic-physical health issue (65.1%)
- 89.2% participants not currently being treated for depression

PHQ-9 Results

Severity of Depression

- 65.1% categorized as none (PHQ-9 score 0-4)
- 18.1 % categorized as mild (PHQ-9 score 5-9)
- 6.0% categorized as moderate*
  (PHQ-9 score 10-14)
- 4.8% categorized as moderately severe*
  (PHQ-9 score 15-19)
- 6% categorized as severe* (PHQ-9 score 20-27)

*Treatment indicated

Depression Results

Depression Rating

- None
- Mild
- Moderate*
- Moderately Severe*
- Severe*
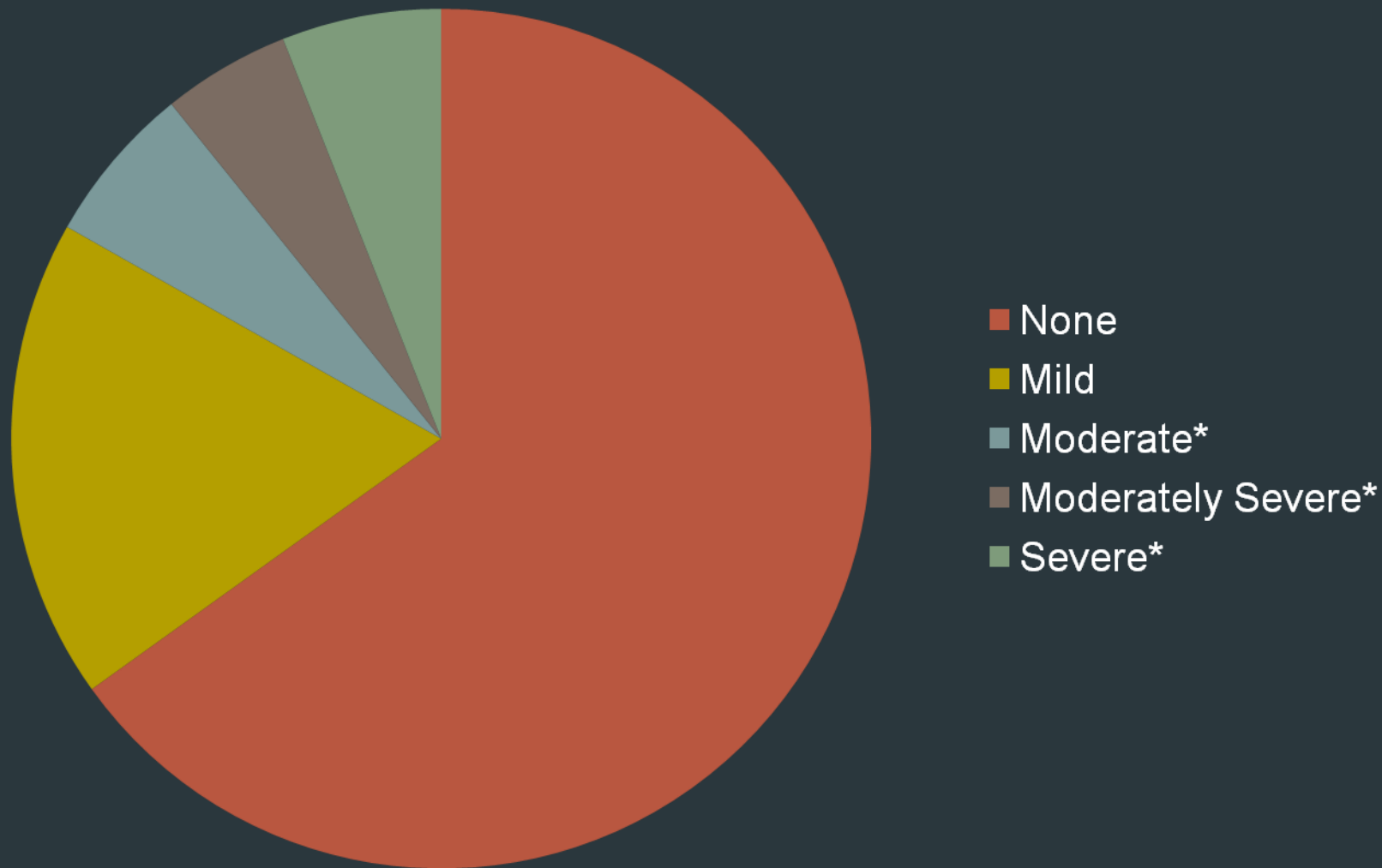
Implications-Community

- Patients were screened for potential depression
- Patients were seen by a provider after screening
- Provider could use screening information for further evaluation and treatment
- Patients may not have received screening otherwise

Implications-Students

- Nursing students were able to provide needed depression screening to a medically underserved community of Latino patients-the service learning component
- Students could realize the tangible results of their actions with the depression screening
- Brought awareness to the students of this readily available and easily administered clinical depression screening tool
- Use of the PHQ-9 enhanced the students' attention to depression in the outpatient community health setting
- Alerted students to the need to address previously unidentified mental health needs.

Limitations

- Sample size relatively small

- Large amounts of nominal data

- Data collection limited to one semester

- No direct student data collection regarding service learning other than end of course evaluations

- Lacked structured reflection regarding service learning

Conclusion

- Nursing students able to serve underserved community

- Service learning was clearly delineated in the course with a specific project

- Underserved community was screened and referred for depression

- Provided community involvement for nursing school beyond hospital setting