Health Status Perceptions and Literacy among Low-Income Mexican-Americans in Texas-Mexico Border *Colonias*

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**SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL**  
26TH INTERNATIONAL  
RESEARCH CONGRESS  
JULY 23-27 2015
# Faculty Disclosure

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Conflicts of Interest</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Sponsorship</td>
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Goals and Objectives

• Session Goal
  ○ H 15 Influencing Health Status of At-Risk Populations

• Session Objectives
  ○ To describe characteristics of low-income Mexican Americans residing in the South Texas-Mexico border region.
  ○ To identify predisposing factors comprising health status perceptions among low-income Mexican Americans residing in the South Texas-Mexico border region.
  ○ To describe the level of health literacy among low-income Mexican Americans residing in the South Texas-Mexico border region.
Setting

Cameron & Hidalgo Counties in Texas
The study was funded by the Office of Biomedical Research and Resources at the University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas.
The purpose of the study was to describe health-related factors of low-income Mexican American families residing in Texas-Mexico colonias.
What we Know

- Perception that families residing in Texas-Mexico border communities are low income
- Perception of low education levels
- Perception of low literacy
- Majority of the families are Mexican American
- Prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus Type 2 (Burke, et al, 1999)
- Prevalence of obesity (Burke, et al, 1999)
- Energy intake of children residing in colonias is 75% of national average and only 63% of the energy goal was met (Faraji, Taméz, Vincent, 2004)
What we Don’t Know

- Sociodemographics
- Health history
- Anthropometric measures
- Health literacy
- Nutrition knowledge
Method

- Exploratory study
- Samples from four separate Texas-Mexico border colonias
Measures/ Predisposing Factors

- **Health history**
  - Anthropometric measurements (perceived and actual)
  - Body mass index (BMI)
  - Activity level
  - Assessment for acanthosis nigricans
  - Perceived health status
  - Degree of worry

- **Anthropometric measures**
  - Height
  - Weight
  - Skinfold measurements

- **Health literacy**
- **Health beliefs**
- **Nutrition knowledge**
- **Sociodemographics**
Findings: (N=175)

1. Female, 72%; 77% married; 57% birthplace Mexico
2. Primary language: Spanish
3. Education: 8% none; 33% elementary; 13% secondary; 30% community or university (attended)
4. Unemployment: 49%
5. Household income: 55% < $10,000
6. BMI: 52% obese; 35% overweight
1. Health Literacy (TOPHLAS): 85% adequate; 13.7% marginal
2. Diabetes: 20% diabetic; 28% spouse diabetic; 55% diabetes in family
3. Nutrition knowledge (Treviño): 63% adequate knowledge
4. Health Status: 34%, moderate; 28% very
5. Degree of Worry: 32% not; 30% slightly
6. Physical activity: minimal to none
Outcomes

1. Skinfold measurements: females greater than males (p<0.0001)
2. Participants reporting diabetes: greater degree of worry
3. US born: English primary, higher education, employed, higher nutrition knowledge
Outcomes

4. Majority perceived themselves healthy:
   a. majority were obese
   b. engaged in little to no exercise activity
   c. low nutrition knowledge

5. Majority: health literate

6. Majority: underreported their weight (p<0.0001)
Strengths

- Data contributes to initial description of this population
- Generates potential for study
Limitations

- Literacy instrument did not measure knowledge.
