

# SUGAR IN THE BLOOD: THE MEANINGS OF DIABETES AMONG NEWLY ARRIVED FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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# Introduction

- Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) is a chronic degenerative illness with the greatest negative effects on economically productive adults.
- It is estimated that about 24.4 million people in the United States is suffering from diabetes and 90% of the cases accounts with T2DM (International Diabetes Federation, 2014).
- Most of research related to T2DM have been based largely on research with individuals already diagnosed with diabetes.

# Background

- The United States Census Bureau determined that in 2010, Filipino Americans numbered 2,555,923, and it is estimated that Filipino Americans are the third largest Asian ethnic group in the United States (Gryn & Gambino, 2012).
- The few available studies suggest that Filipinos are among the highest-risk groups for developing diabetes (Araneta et. al., 2000; Serafica, Lane, Ceria-Ulep, 2013; McNeely and Boyko, 2004).

# Significance

- Knowing how Filipino immigrants perceive diabetes, healthy lifestyle and barriers to healthy living will allow healthcare providers to design and implement more effective and more holistic interventions and provide more services suited to this population.
- Healthy People 2020 proposed to “reduce the disease and economic burden of diabetes mellitus T2DM and improve the quality of life for all persons who have, or are at risk for, T2DM” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service (USDHHS), 2010).

# Significance

- Immigrant health studies conducted in the past draw little attention in describing fundamental variations in the conceptual meaning of healthy lifestyle among disadvantaged subgroups (Whitemore, 2000; Serafica, Lane, & Ceria-Ulep, 2013).

# Purpose and Research Questions

- The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to describe how first generation non-diabetic Filipino immigrants delineate their knowledge and beliefs about diabetes, healthy lifestyle, and perceived barriers to healthy lifestyle.
- The questions that guided this inquiry are the following: (a) How do Filipino immigrants define diabetes?, (b) How do Filipino immigrants define healthy lifestyle?, and (c) What are the perceived barriers that are preventing this population from practicing healthy lifestyle?

# Recruitment and Ethics

- IRB approval
- Sub-urban city in southeastern part of U.S.
- Catholic churches in the community
- Snowball technique
- Inclusion:

First generation, less than 10 years in U.S., non-diabetic, fluent in English

- Total of forty six (n=46) participants

16 Males and 30 Females

Informed Consents were obtained

# Method

- To discover the diabetes, healthy lifestyle, and perceived barriers to practice healthy lifestyle meanings, expressions, and practices of Filipino immigrants without diabetes, a descriptive qualitative study design was used.



# Method

- Qualitative design
- In-depth interviews
- Participant observation
- Field notes
- Interviews were audio-taped
- Prior to analyses of the transcript, each transcript was read at least twice and compared with the recordings to ensure accuracy and completeness
- NVivo 8 software

# Analyses

- Significant statements were coded into three themes of defining diabetes, aiming for healthy lifestyle, and sensing the barriers to health lifestyle.
- Under each theme, categories were created to describe the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that the participants discussed.
- Each theme is supported by direct quotes (or italicized) from the participants.

# Defining Diabetes

- Naming the Condition
- Understanding the Cause
- Recognizing the Symptoms
- Believing the Seriousness of the Disease



# Defining Diabetes

## Naming the Condition

- Sugar Disease
- Too much sweetness
- Blood is sugary

## Understanding the Cause

- Too much sugar causes diabetes
- Too much sodas
- It is a rich man's disease



# Defining Diabetes

## Recognizing the Symptoms

- Dizzy
- Tired
- Faints a lot
- Slow death

## Believing the Seriousness of the Disease

- It will damage the organs
- It is fatal

# Aiming for Healthy Lifestyle

- Watching One's Diet
- Recognizing the Importance of Exercise
- Praying for Health



# Aiming for Healthy Lifestyle

## Watching One's Diet

- Eating a good diet
- Reducing sugar and sweets
- Eating lots of vegetables

## Recognizing the Importance of Exercise

- “I used to be active”
- YMCA is expensive
- A place we can play during winter months

# Aiming for Healthy Lifestyle

## Praying for Health

- Pray for good life and good health
- It is a family thing
- Attending mass every Sunday





# Sensing the Barriers to Healthy Lifestyle

- Putting the Pedal to the Metal
- Trying to Nourish Two Worlds
- Experiencing Structural Discrimination
- Problems Navigating Resources



# Sensing the Barriers to Healthy Lifestyle

## Putting the Pedal to the Metal

- Let it roll
- Busy “American Lives”
- What junk food? It is so convenient

## Trying to Nourish Two Worlds

- Financial Constraints
- Monthly remittances to the Philippines
- Payback for previous loans



# Sensing the Barriers to Healthy Lifestyle

## Experiencing Structural Discrimination

- Sacrificed professional skills and careers
- Previous professions are not recognized

## Problems Navigating Resources

- Doctors are role models
- Education is good for use
- *Teach us to prepare healthy meals*

# Discussion

- Lack of diabetes knowledge in general
- Recognition that poor diet leads to poor health
- Time constraints
- Occupational Adjustments
- Economic Distress
- Lack of awareness to assistance to resources

# Limitations

- One sub-urban region
- Can not be generalized



# Recommendations

- Diabetes prevention awareness
- Further research on the following topics:
  - a. Social determinants of health
  - b. Acculturative stress
  - c. Social support
  - d. Decision-making behaviors
- Delay the onset of diabetes
- Overall improvement of quality of life

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