

Exploring the Perceptions of Cardiovascular Disease Risk among Mexican-American Women with Type II Diabetes

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BACKGROUND

Latinos are twice as likely than non-Latinos to have diabetes and are two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease (CVD) relative to those without diabetes. Mexican-Americans are at great risk for developing CVD because they are the second highest of Latino subgroups to be diagnosed with diabetes which is a risk factor for CVD. However, there is little known about the perceptions of CVD risk among Mexican-American women with type II diabetes.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of living with diabetes and perceptions of cardiovascular disease risk in Mexican-American women with type II diabetes.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of living with type II diabetes among Mexican-American women?
2. What are the perceptions of CVD risk among Mexican-American women with type II diabetes?

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive study with 6 Mexican-American women with type II DM was conducted. Demographic information was collected and level of acculturation was measured. Spanish transcripts were transcribed via a committee approach and were analyzed using content analysis to identify themes.

RESULTS

SAMPLE

Participants ranged from ages 55-76 years of age (mean 66). Half of the participants had completed less than grade school education, the other half completed grade school. The annual family income was <19,999 for all participants. The years of diabetes type II diagnosis ranged from 4-24 years (mean 14). Acculturation scores ranged from 1.42 to 2.25, scores <2.99 are considered less acculturated. All participants scored less than 2.99 & are considered less acculturated.

Conceptual Framework

The Common Sense Model of Self-Regulation aided to analyze the Mexican-American womens' perception of their diabetes by analyzing the components of *identity, cause, timeline, consequence, and curability and controllability.*

THEMES

Perceptions of living with diabetes:

- **Difficulty in controlling type II diabetes**

It is really very hard to deal with this disease...living my life with diabetes it's very difficult.

Well it is very difficult for me [to live with diabetes] because one has to take care of them selves a lot.

- **Impacts food habits**

...diabetes is very difficult because of the foods that one can not eat all of ones' foods, it has to be special foods, everything that one takes has to be special...

The greatest problem I am having with diabetes is that I have not been able to control it because I do not know how to balance my food very well.

- **Emotional:** "susto" scare, "coraje" anger & "tristeza" sadness

Perceptions of CVD risk:

- 4 participants reported type II DM as a risk factor for CVD. Hypertension, overweight/obese, smoking history, and family were the least reported.
- Chest pain/discomfort was the most reported symptoms of a heart attack.
- Most commonly reported stroke symptom was a headache. Visual changes & confusion were not reported.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study suggest that more education is needed about diabetes type II, CVD risk factors, symptoms of a heart attack, and stroke.

IMPLICATIONS

- Interventions should focus on the empowerment of controlling their illness and also focus on the psychological component.
- Teaching patients who are at risk for CVD is important, especially helping them understand the heart attack and stroke symptoms and risk factors of both.

