Background and Major Findings

Five percent of immigrants to the U.S. are from India. Their health seeking behaviors and perceived barriers to health care are unknown. It was found that Indian immigrant access health care quickly for children while the adults prefer to use Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). Insurance plays a major role in accessing health care.

Purpose & Aims

• This study explored the health seeking behaviors of Indian immigrants to the U.S., their patterns of accessing health care, use of CAM therapy, and attitudes towards mental health issues.

Significance

• Regular health care access may ensure optimum health and disease specific screening. Lack of such access may result in delayed diagnosis and treatment.
• Knowledge of the use of CAM therapy can help prevent drug-herb interactions.

Methods

• Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study
• WCU IRB approved the study
• Conducted 20 in-person semi-structured interviews
• Recruited participants using snowball method
• Collected data on demographics, current health, lifestyle, prevalence of chronic illness, factors that affect access to health care as well as health beliefs and attitudes, and use of CAM therapy
• Data entered in EXCEL Spreadsheet
• Analyzed using Dedoose software
• Participants received a $15.00 Wawa gift card

Results

• Health care facilities are accessed quickly when a child becomes ill.
• Adults prefer CAM and natural remedies.
  “I prefer the turmeric, pepper, honey and milk because it has no side effects and it’s more natural. I prefer this for everyone”.
• Half of the participants bring medicine from India.
• Insurance coverage drives the annual physicals. Adults & seniors may miss routine screening for chronic illnesses without insurance.
• Those with insurance completed blood or other screening tests.
• Positive aspects of U.S. health care: access to care & having insurance.
  “Insurance is a major factor for security and peace of mind, and, we can use it anytime as needed”
• Barriers to health care access: cultural preference, appointment availability, appointment wait time, & lack of insurance.
  “My husband took one month leave from his job the day before we left for India, his work told us that we were going to lose insurance, so we lost medical insurance and I was pregnant”
• Faith-Based Therapy is a preferred for mental health issues.

Conclusions

• Insurance plays a major role in health care access.
• Natural remedies and Ayurveda are preferred CAM.
• Spirituality is pivotal for healthy living.
• Emphasis on health promotion, access to care, and insurance are positive factors of US health care.
• Wait time and insurance are identified as barriers.

Practice Implications

• Knowledge of patient preference will enhance patient experience, promote excellence in nursing and increase patient/family satisfaction.
• Understanding prevalence of CAM therapy may alert nurses to verify drug interactions.
• Identifying the role of spirituality and health beliefs may help health care professionals to provide EBP and proper resources to patients.

Limitations

• India is a country of several cultures and practices. All states were not represented in the interviews.
• Most of the participants interviewed were middle class, educated, professional women.
• Findings may vary if people of low socio-economic strata were interviewed.

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