A Descriptive Study Focusing on Mental Health, Diagnoses, Locus of Control, and Chronic Health Conditions in Rural Women

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Introduction

Rural women are underrepresented in the research regarding issues related to mental health. Although depression in women has been discussed at length, few studies have specifically focused on rural populations (Groh 2012) or included the broader context of mental health among various aspects of health. Because the Midwest United States consists of many rural inhabitants, this research team chose to explore this aggregate and determine supportive measures that would benefit the population of rural women.

Purpose

1) Examine relationships between chronic health problems, locus of control, and mental health diagnoses.
2) Determine primary locus of control of rural women.
3) Explore incidences of anxiety and depression among rural women.

Methods

- Convenience sample of 50 women who received health care at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).
- Design was quantitative, descriptive study using a review of historic data from each participant’s health record at the FQHC.
- Demographic and health information was reviewed from each participant’s health record including chronic health conditions and four specifically selected non-experimental surveys. These surveys included self-efficacy, depression, locus of control, and state and trait anxiety.
- Study was completed over a two month period.

Results

1) Women with female problems reported less anxiety.
2) Women with female problems reported higher self-efficacy.
3) Women with hypertension had significantly higher depression.

Statistical Analysis

- Women with female problems reported less anxiety ($p = .042$) ($t (48) = 2.09, p = .042, d = 0.60$)
- Women with female problems reported higher self-efficacy ($p = .047$) ($t (48) = -2.04, p = .047, d = 0.59$)
- Women with hypertension had significantly higher depression ($p = .001$) ($t (48) = -3.50, p = .001, d = 1.13$)

Conclusions

- There is a definite link between hypertension and depression in the rural women population; more research is needed.
- Literature highlights the pattern of increased mortality for individuals who have co-morbidities of depression and hypertension (Kuo et al., 2011; Kabutoya & Kario, 2015). Based on findings from this study it is recommended this population is in need of further education and interventions.
- The identification of female problems being associated with less anxiety and more self-efficacy was unexpected but significant. Additional research is needed to further delineate the meaning of female problems.
- Health care providers need to be appropriately trained to understand the unique health needs of the rural women population.