UNDERSERVED POPULATION: RURAL MEXICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE ASTHMA

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Introduction:
In the larger study with a tri-ethnic sample of rural families with a school-aged child (n=183) who has a diagnosis of asthma, Mexican American families were found to have significantly lower socioeconomic status [F=15.04 (3,170) p<.001] than either African American or White families, and yet they performed more asthma management [F=4.45 (2/169), p=.013]. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contributed to family asthma management in these rural Mexican American families.

Method(s):
Exploratory analysis. The Mexican American sub-sample was composed of parent-child dyads with 56 (65%) boys and 30 (35%) girls and the children were an average of 8.81 years (sd = 1.27). Variables of interest included parents' asthma management; and children's asthma severity, quality of life (QOL), and absenteeism rate.

Results:
Using the Hollingshead Index of socioeconomic status (SES), participants were sorted into higher (42%) and lower (58%) SES groups. Among the lower SES families there was higher absenteeism (m=5.36, sd=4.03 versus m=4.18, sd=5.77; n.s.); more severe asthma (m=6.27, sd=1.75 versus m=5.44, sd=1.33; F=5.26, p=.025); and greater asthma management performed (m=4.12, sd=.65 versus m=3.61, sd=.82; F=9.46, p=.003) than in the higher SES families. However, the children's QOL scores were not significantly different between lower and higher SES groups.

In addition, 18 families (21%) did not have health insurance and all of these families were in the lower SES group.

Discussion:
The findings demonstrate that SES contributed to significant differences in children's experiences with asthma (e.g. asthma severity, absenteeism). Poorer Mexican American families were found to have greater disadvantages than the higher SES Mexican American families and are working harder (as evidence by home asthma management & absenteeism) to care for their children's asthma, but that they have fewer resources (e.g. insurance, SES) to accomplish this work.

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