

Proyecto Puentes de Salud: An Exploration of Cardiovascular Health and Risk Factors in Rural Mexico

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Abstract:

The 2000 NC census estimated a 1200% increase in Hispanic immigration to the Triangle area. A large proportion of the economic migrants come from rural Mexican communities, and little is known about their antecedent lifestyles and health risks and how these might contribute to their current health status. Therefore, this study was initiated to determine cardiovascular risk factors of rural residents in Guanajuato, Mexico in order to provide physicians with an all-encompassing view of Latino health. A convenience sample of 267 participants, recruited from six rural communities in Guanajuato during June and July of 2006, were (1) offered free screenings for cholesterol, fasting glucose, blood pressure, and obesity; (2) counseled about risk factors for cardiovascular diseases and diabetes; and (3) interviewed using a standardized questionnaire that included demographic information, past medical history, family history, dietary and lifestyle behaviors, and social and psychological health. Two hundred and sixty seven participants (ages 20-85) were screened and interviewed. Prevalence of hypertension (>140/90) was 29.96%, impaired fasting glucose (>100 mg/dL) was 25.02%. Frequency of abnormal cholesterol and HDL was 19.85 % (>200 mg/dL) and 85.55% (<40 mg/dL men, <50mg/dL women), respectively. Abdominal obesity rates were 73.03%. We detected a high prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors in rural Mexicans that warrants further investigation. According to WHO guidelines, 23% were positive for The Metabolic Syndrome. Lack of education on cardiovascular risk factors and healthy lifestyles seem to play a large role in perpetuating poor diet, limited exercise, and daily health choices. Improving the health of Mexicans in their place of origin may have a ripple effect on the health of Latino immigrants we treat in our community. Also, understanding of this expanding patient population will give American physicians a head-start when treating and educating in the clinic. The study was limited by the under-representation of men in the research and by being a convenience sample.

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