

PILOT APPRAISAL OF VARIABLES AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICANS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKS ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Hispanics in the USA often suffer poor oral health. More appropriate solutions may be designed if we move beyond the simplistic interpretation of poor oral outcomes being associated with 1-2 variables, e.g., language; such an approach has failed to provide consistent interpretations, and offers no points for intervention. We propose to examine a constellation of variables interwoven into multilevel strategies under a new(er) paradigm, social network theories (<http://cmol.nbi.dk/models/infocflow/infocflow.html>). Objectives: To qualitatively identify domains of variables modulating oral health outcomes among 1st-2nd generation Mexican-American immigrants. Methods: Through key informant interviews, we ascertained KAB variables in immigrant families originating in Jalisco, Mexico. This community has had a strong, revolving presence for decades in a well-delimited location in Indianapolis, IN, around St. Patrick's parish. We did not conduct clinical exams but used questions from American national surveys to document health perceptions, availability of dental services/insurance, presence of dental pain and impaired function in adults and children, and family structure and sociodemographic profiles during a Catholic festival (no incentives, no appointments). Data were content-analyzed. Results: Data were collected from 22 parent-child dyads (15 female adults, 7 male; mean age 24±6.3yrs; data from the oldest child and the interviewee). Frequencies of dental emergencies and acute problems varied markedly, with recurrence patterns. A minority exhibited consistent dental attendance, often enabled by public/private dental insurance. Time in the USA varied considerably, with 1st and 2nd generation immigrant parents and children sharing the household. Occupations ranged from manual to clerical, and education from elementary to college among adults. Conclusion: Interviews were feasible and acceptable, and the experience informed future fieldwork considerations. We are using the variables to design a social networks study to characterize the evolution of patterns between families in Indianapolis and among peers living in Jalisco, aiming to measure impacts ascribable to immigration along acculturation spectra.