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The Effect of COVID-19 on Depression in Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic Populations in South Jersey

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Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been challenging for Americans and the world as a whole. It has especially taken a toll on mental health. Studies show that the incidence of depression in the United States was 3 times greater during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic times (1). One specific community in the United States that has been greatly affected by the pandemic is the Hispanic American community. Many Americans across the country have received federal surveys that aim to determine the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Results revealed that the Hispanic population had the greatest rise in mental illness with 40% dealing with anxiety or depression, which eventually reached 50% by late 2020 (2). This can be due, in part, by socioeconomic status, health disparities, and the stigma of seeking help in communities of color. This research project explores the association between ethnicity/race and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is predicted that there will be a greater prevalence of depression among the Hispanic population in South Jersey.

Methods

The process of conducting the research project consisted of administering Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQ-9) to Rowan Family Medicine patients in Stratford and Hammonton, NJ. Inclusion criteria was localized to the state of New Jersey and included patients above the age of 18.. A total of 200 patients were surveyed throughout the course of the project

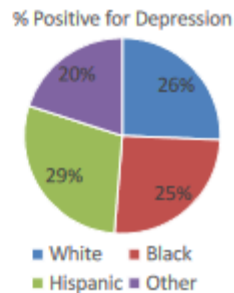


Fig 1

PHQ-9 Results in White Patients

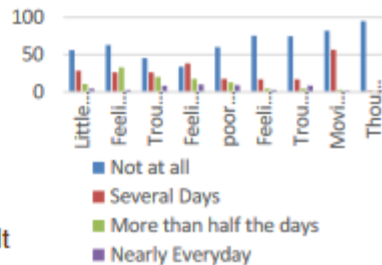


Fig 3

PHQ-9 Results in Hispanic Patients



Fig 5

Results

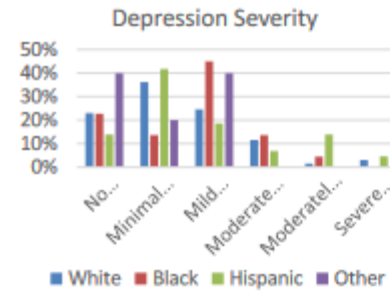


Fig2

PHQ-9 Results in Black Patients

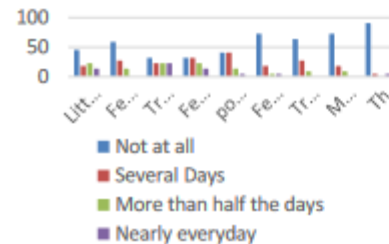


Fig 4

PHQ-9 Results for 'Other' Races

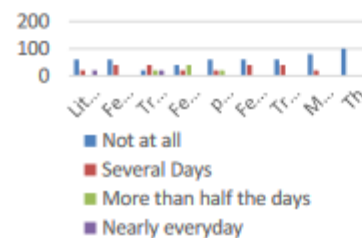


Fig 6

Discussion

- Higher Depression rates , severities of depression and high suicidal ideologies among Hispanics can be attributed to the psychosocial stressors related to social determinants of health
- COVID-19 has exacerbated stressors by increasing existing food insecurities, job losses, and limited access to care for COVID positive individuals without health insurance
- Hispanics faced a great deal of stress as frontline workers in markets, sanitation, and hospitals
- The stigma around mental illness and seeking help in Hispanic communities, and generally in communities of color may have contributed to higher severities of depression seen among Hispanics .

Conclusion

The high prevalence of depression among the Hispanic population suggests that extra measures are needed in vulnerable populations. Historically, the Hispanic population has been faced with lower access to mental health services. Therefore, there is an urgent need for outreach programs to address mental health in these populations in order to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgements

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References

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