Mental Health Aspects of Diabetes in Elders from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds

Chinese American Elders

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Background

- Largest subgroup of Asian American elders and number over 236,000
- Elders are varied in their acculturation level to the mainstream U.S. culture
  - Income
  - Education
  - Religion
  - Living arrangements
Common historical influences

- Discrimination in late 1800s and early 1900s
- Chinese Exclusion Act
- Divided families
- Post World War II “Two Chinas”
- 1960’s decrease in discrimination
- Immigration
Background (cont.)

- Current cohort still heavily foreign born
- Mixed levels of living conditions
- Considerable religious heterogeneity
  - Protestants or Catholics
  - Buddhists
  - Traditional Confucian and Taoists
- Healthcare providers need to recognize importance of family members in decision of care
Diabetes - Risk

- Diabetes is becoming a health challenge in Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the U.S. but there is limited data available on the prevalence.
- Multi-Ethnic Study of Arteriosclerosis (MESA) (Saad, Sampson et al., 2003)
  - Impaired glucose was found to be twice as high in Chinese Americans as Caucasians but lower than in African Americans and Hispanics.
Diabetes – Risk (cont.)

- Non-institutionalized Chinese Americans aged 60-96 (Choi, McGancy et al., 1990)
  - Chinese American men and women reported a history of diabetes, higher than the 8.8% for older women in the U.S. but similar to that of older men
Diabetes – Nutrition Education for Treatment

- Traditional Foods
  - Mandarin, Szechwan, Hunan, Shanghai, Canton
- Core foods include:
  - Fruits (oranges, melons, mango, litchi)
  - Vegetables (bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, bok choy, Chinese broccoli, Chinese long beans, garlic, ginger, mushrooms)
  - Grains (long grain rice, wheat -noodles, dumplings and flour wrappers)
  - Dairy products - not traditional Chinese diet
  - Protein sources - meats (bite size pieces of pork, beef, chicken, and duck), fish, eggs, legumes
- Tea
Typical meal includes soup, rice, and two or three mixed vegetables

Food selection criteria based on yin and yang
  - Not temperature but energy food possesses

Yang food examples
  - Ginger, garlic, meats, eggs, etc.

Ying food example
  - Vegetables, melons, fish
Nutrition – Acculturation Issues

- Influential factors to American diets
  - Length of residence in U.S.
  - Education level
  - Ability to speak English
- Other factors
  - Food availability
  - Quality
  - Cost
- Breakfast choices are the most evident of dietary acculturation
  - Risk factors include diseases like type 2 diabetes

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Nutrition – Strategies

- Make healthy food choices
- Control food portions
- Modify recipes

Resources

Nutrition – Strategies (cont.)

- Resources, implementation strategies
  - Georgia State University. *Nutrition education for new Americans project* (Chinese language version: Available at [http://monarch.gsu.edu/nutrition/Chinese.htm](http://monarch.gsu.edu/nutrition/Chinese.htm))
  - Registered Dieticians or Certified Diabetes Educators
    - [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
    - [www.diabeteseducator.org](http://www.diabeteseducator.org)
Depression - Risk

- Older Chinese immigrants in U.S. East Coast Cities (Mui, Kang et al., 2003)
  - Prevalence rates of depression ranging from 26% to 51% based on different versions of the Geriatric Depression Scale

- Chinese American Psychiatric Epidemiology Study (Takeuchi, Chung et al., 1998)
  - Major depressive episodes and dysthymia in a sample of 1,747 Chinese American households indicated the lifetime rate of major depression was 6.9% and 5.2% dysthymia
Depression – Risk (cont.)

- National Comorbidity Survey (Kessler, McGonagle et al., 1994)
  - Lower rates of depression in Chinese Americans
  - Lower rates due to social stigma, lack of Western diagnostic criteria for depression, coping mechanisms that protect against depression
Depression – Risk (cont.)

- Older Chinese American women (Liu & Yu, 1985)
  - Chinese American women age 65-74 suicide rates 3 times higher than Caucasian women in the U.S.
  - Chinese American women age 75-80 suicide rates 7 times higher than Caucasian women in the U.S.
Depression – Risk (cont.)

- Los Angeles Study (Diego, Yamamoto et al., 1994)
  - Most women who committed suicide lived with their children
  - Some suicide notes indicated that they did not want to burden their children
Cognitive Loss and Dementia - Risk

- Hong Kong Study (Chiu, Lam et al., 1998)
  - Prevalence rates of dementia in a sample of 1,034 Chinese age 70+
  - Alzheimer’s disease accounted for 64.6%
  - Vascular dementia accounted for 29.3%
  - Rate of Alzheimer’s disease lower than in studies with Caucasians