Mental Health Aspects of Diabetes in Elders from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds

Japanese American Elders

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Background

- First generation immigrants (called *Issei*) worked in the fields of Hawaii in the 1860’s.
- The current cohort of older Japanese Americans, known as *Nisei*, are the second generation, children of the *Issei*.
- Traditional Japanese families were vertically structured and male-dominated.
- The social structure and moral codes were based on Meiji era Confucian values (e.g., filial piety, deference to authority)
Background (cont.)

- During World War II, the Japanese were removed from their homes and placed in camps.
- 1990’s, after battle with Congress survivors were given redress and reparations.
- Labeled as “model minority” and belief that Japanese American families “take care of their own”:
  - This belief has prevented elders from receiving government assistance.
- Since most Japanese American elders are now Nisei or Sansei, most speak English.
Diabetes - Risk

- Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (Rodriguez et al., 2002)
  - 80% of the original 8,006 Japanese American men (age 71-93) were interviewed in 1991-93.
  - Prevalence of impaired glucose metabolism was 18%
- King County Washington (Fujimoto et al., 1987)
  - 56% of Japanese American men (age 45-74) were found to have abnormal glucose tolerance and 20% had diabetes
  - ½ of the men with diabetes were undiagnosed
Diabetes - Risk (cont.)

- Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (Rodriguez, Burchfiel et al., 1996)
  - Lower prevalence of Type II diabetes
    - Higher levels of physical activity
    - Consumption of more carbohydrates
    - Less fat
    - Less animal proteins
Diabetes – Culturally Appropriate Management

- Cultural Remedies for Diabetes
  - Herbs - traditional Japanese Medicine (Kampo)
  - Dietary Practices – based on Chinese Medicine
    Theory of imbalance of yin (cold) and yang (hot)
  - Theory – Kampo remedies will restore or unblock “Ki” (vital life force in the body)
  - Cultural Healers – herbalists, acupuncturists, massage therapists
Diabetes – Culturally Appropriate Management

Resources

- Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database. [www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com)
Diabetes – Nutrition Education for Treatment of Diabetes

- **Traditional foods**
  - **fruits**: oranges, tangerines, melons, pear apples, persimmons (fruits are usually served fresh and for dessert), plums (fresh, preserved, salted)
  - **vegetables**: bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, cabbage, daikon radish, onions, ginger, mushrooms (shitake and others), seaweed
  - **grains**: short grain rice, wheat and buckwheat (used in noodles);
  - **dairy products**: in traditional Japanese diets, dairy products are not commonly consumed;
  - **protein sources**: fish/shellfish (raw, cooked, dried, smoked), soybeans (tofu, miso), meats (bite size pieces of chicken, and beef), legumes (soybeans, red beans, lima beans) and
  - **green tea**. A typical meal includes soup, rice, and other dishes that are shared (fish dishes are common).
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 (Japanese language version)*: Available at http://monarch.gsu.edu/nutrition/Japanese.htm
  - Nasco Food Replicas: Available from Nasco Nutrition Teaching Aids. www.eNASCO.com

- Registered Dieticians or Certified Diabetes Educators
  - www.eatright.org
  - www.diabeteseducator.org
Relative - Depression

- Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (Takeshita, Masaki et al., 2002)
  - Physically healthy, depressed older Japanese American men had higher mortality than the physically ill.
- Five populations of older Asian immigrants in New York City (Mui et al., 2003)
  - 72% to 76% Japanese American elders scored in the depressed range of the Geriatric Depression Scale.
  - This was the highest percentage of the five populations.
Relative – Cognitive Loss and Dementia

- Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (Kalmijn, Foley et al., 2000)
  - Syndrome X or metabolic cardiovascular syndrome (cluster of cardiovascular risk factors including impaired glucose tolerance and high blood pressure) was found to increase the risk of vascular dementia but not Alzheimer’s disease.
Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (White, Petrovitch et al., 1996)

- Prevalence of Alzheimer’s disease in the Hawaii sample was 5.4%, higher than in Japan but similar to Americans of European ancestry.
- Prevalence of vascular dementia was found to be 4.2%, slightly lower than in Japan but higher than in those of European-ancestry
Associated Honolulu Heart Program (HHP) (Ross, Webster, Abbott et al., 1997)

- 21% of family informants failed to recognize memory problems in subjects diagnosed with dementia
- 52% mild dementia was unrecognized by family
- 13% severe dementia was unrecognized by family