Using a Participatory Process to Assess the Health of Latino Immigrant Men in a Community with a Growing Latino Population

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Background

- Latinos increased 71% in Allegheny County between 2000 and 2010, yet they are under 5% of the population.
- There has been a significant increase in the Latino population in the area.
- New growth community (NGC): growing numbers of Latinos (< 5% of the population)
- There is a need to improve access to health care.
- Men often immigrate without their families.

Objectives

1. Explore the health needs of LIM in Allegheny County
2. Identify health care access barriers among LIM in Allegheny County

Methodology

Community-based participatory research based on LEGS initiative:

Data Collection:

1. LIM: 4 focus groups and 66 surveys.
2. Health providers and social service personnel: 10 interviews.

Analysis:

1. Thematic analysis of qualitative data
2. Descriptive survey statistics and comparison by time in the U.S.

Results

Demographic characteristics of focus group and survey participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the U.S. (mean)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not finished high school</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction work</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All percentages were calculated using only valid answers.

Theme 1: Loneliness

LIM situation
- LIM immigrant to financially help their families
- Leave family behind
- Face anti-immigrant environment
- Foreign culture and language

Results for LIM
- Feel nostalgic and isolated
- Low self worth
- To avoid stress:
  - Overwork
  - Leading to related injuries
  - More stress
- High alcohol consumption
  - Leading to sexual behavior that is of high risk for contracting STDs
  - More stress

Quick Facts

- 50% of survey respondents report at least 2 binge drinking episodes in the past month (no differences by time in the U.S.)
- Depression scores were worse for participants who had been in the U.S. for 5 years or less (Chi square (1df) = 5.15; p = 0.02).

Theme 2: Preserving Health

LIM Goals:
- Eat well
- Rest
- Exercise
- Have a social life

LIM challenges:
- Extensive work hours
- Community disconnection
- Not being prevention oriented (according to providers).

Discussion

Our three sources of data confirm that fear, cost, language, and the main barriers to accessing care.

Most health problems stem from social isolation and loneliness that cause stress in an adverse environment. New immigrants are at higher risk of depression. LIM’s isolation is maintained in this NGC, since Latinos are scattered throughout the county.

Drinking is a problem for many LIM in the community, regardless of time in the U.S.

LIM hold a lifestyle concept of prevention. Providers instead, tend to view prevention as use of health services.

Providers mention specific difficulties of the health care system as well as issues of legal documentation more often than LIM. It is possible that providers are able to articulate these issues more clearly because they encounter many LIM with the same problems. LIM can speak of their own personal experience and sometimes that of their close family or friends.

LIM’s description of building on social relationships to obtain care has been described before and confirms findings in prior research.

Limitations: small sample size, mostly Mexican sample, exploratory study.

Strengths: Innovative access to the perspective of low-income/low-education LIM in an NGC.

Conclusions

LIM face social isolation that results in negative health consequences. A intervention to assist LIM in building the necessary social connections to improve their social, mental and physical health as well as provide means to access the health system is needed.

Survey Results: Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binge drinking &gt;=3 in the past 30 days</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

LIM in building the necessary social connections to improve their social, mental and physical health as well as provide means to access the health system is needed.

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Latino immigrant men (LIM) are an understudied population in the US. LIM living apart from their families experience additional health care barriers and increased risk for negative health outcomes. We conducted a health assessment with the ultimate goal of creating a network of male lay health advisors (promotores) in a county with a small yet growing Latino population (2%).

Using community-based participatory research, we explored LIM's health issues and health care access barriers. We conducted four focus groups with a total of 25 LIM, 10 open-ended interviews with health and social service providers, and surveys with 66 LIM. Focus group and interview transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparison method. Survey data were analyzed by length of stay in the U.S. We triangulated the three sources of data to identify common themes.

The vast majority of participating LIM was Mexican (69%) and lived without a partner (18%). Overall, 58% participating LIM where <35 years old, 53% had been <= years in the U.S., 53% had not completed high school, and 95% were uninsured. A total of 47% surveyed LIM reported at least 2 binge drinking episodes in the past year. Both in surveys and focus groups, prominent problems were loneliness, depression, and alcohol abuse. LIM focus groups and surveys as well as provider interviews identified the main barriers to care to be cost, misinformation, and lack of Spanish speaking staff. Additionally, LIM in focus groups explained that loneliness and lack of social connections prompted unhealthy behaviors and depression.

LIM face social isolation that results in negative health consequences. A promotores network should assist LIM in building the necessary social connections to improve their social, mental and physical health as well as provide means to access the health system.

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