RACE-RELATED STRESS AND COPING AMONG OLDER AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER

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Background: Cancer

- African Americans have the highest death and shortest survival rates compared to any other racial and ethnic groups in the US for most cancers (ACS, 2007)
- In 2003, the death rate for all cancers combined was reported to be 35% higher in African American men when compared to Caucasian men (ACS, 2007)
- Primarily the socioeconomic factors (income, education, housing, etc.) greatly influence these racial health disparities

Background: Race

- Race-related stress is "the result of both acute and chronic encounters with racism and discrimination " (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996).
- The effects of racism on health
  1. Psychological
  2. Physiological
  3. Social

Background: Coping

- Coping styles can modify the effects of stress (racism)
- Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as "cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage demands appraised as taxing or exceeding resources."
- Coping styles cancer patients use to handle the stress of the experience (Dunkel-Schetter, Feisten, Taylor & Falke, 1992)
  1. Distancing
  2. Seeking support, positive focus & cognitive-escape avoidance
  3. Behavioral-escape avoidance

Purpose

- To explore how older African American men cope with cancer and how experienced racism correlates with their coping strategies.

Methods: Procedures

- This study is a part of a larger study
- Eligibility criteria: African American, age 55-89, cancer diagnosis
- Participants recruited from oncology clinics
- Face-to-face interviews conducted by trained research staff

Methods: Sample

Table 1 *Demographics*

	Frequency (n=103)	%
Age		
M=64.1,		
SD=7.0,		
Range 55-87		
Types of Cancer		
Breast	3	2.9
Colon	13	12.7
Lung	19	18.6
Prostate	25	24.5
Head & Neck	14	13.7
Stomach	4	3.9
Brain	2	2.0
Myeloma	3	2.9
Pancreas	4	3.9
Esophogial	5	4.9
Rectal	2	2.0
Other	8	7.8
Missing	1	

Note. Missing indicates participant did not provide information.

Table 2 *Socioeconomic characteristics*

	Frequency (n=103)	%
Employment		
Unemployed	55	53.4
Retired	35	34.0
Employed	13	12.6
Education		
<High school	48	46.6
High school/GED	31	30.0
>High school	24	23.3
Income		
<$20,000	65	63.1
$20,000-40,000	17	16.5
>$40,000	18	17.5
Missing	3	
Marital Status		
Married	41	40.0
Single	11	10.7
Divorced/Separated	41	40.0
Widowed	10	9.7

Methods: Measures & Analysis

- Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS-B)
  - Assesses the daily encounters with racism
    - Individual
    - Institutional
    - Cultural
- Ways of Coping Cancer Version (WOC-CA)
  - Identifies the dimensions of coping with cancer
    - Seek or using social support
    - Focusing on the positive
    - Distancing
    - Cognitive escape-avoidance
    - Behavioral escape-avoidance
- Descriptive and correlational analysis conducted

Results

- Types of racism experienced
  - Cultural racism (M=2.0, SD=1.0)
  - Individual racism (M=1.6, SD=1.1
  - Institutional racism (M=1.3, SD=1.2)

- Types of coping styles used
  - Focus on the Positive (M=2.5, SD=1.0)
  - Cognitive-Escape Avoidance (M=2.4, SD=0.7)
  - Distancing (M=2.4, SD=0.7)
  - Seek and Use Social Support (M=2.3, SD=0.8)
  - Behavioral-Escape Avoidance (M=0.7, SD=0.5)

Results

Table 3 *Pearson's Correlations for the WOC-CA Subscales and IRRS-B* (n=103)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Seek & Use Social Support	1	.47**	.19	.45**	.03	.13	.21*	.20*
2. Cognitive-Escape Avoidance		1	.31**	.46**	.20*	.18	.13	.11
3.Distancing			1	.36**	.25*	.21*	.21*	.19
4. Focus on the Positive				1	.15	.12	.22*	.25*
5. Behavioral- Escape Avoidance					1	.21*	.16	.12
6. Cultural Racism						1	.68**	.75**
7. Institutional Racism							1	.83**
8. Individual Racism								1

Note. **Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlations significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results

- Significant correlations found
  - Cultural racism
    - Distancing (r=.21, p<.05)
    - Behavioral Escape Avoidance (r=.21, p<.05)
  - Individual racism
    - Seek and Use Social Support (r=.20, p<.05)
    - Focus on the Positive (r=.25 p<.05)
  - Institutional racism
    - Seek and Use Social Support (r=.21, p<.05)
    - Distancing (r=.21, p<.05)

Future Directions

- Further investigation of factors that may influence coping styles and the effects of racism
  - Age
    - Older adults have lower use of coping in general (Deimling, Wagner, Bowman, Sterns and Kercher, 2006)
    - Accept things beyond their control (Deimling et al., 2006)
    - May perceive less racism and discrimination (Broman, 2000)
  - Gender
    - Men cope by focusing on the problem & engaging in avoidance coping (Ptacek, J.T., Pierce, J.J. Ptacek, and Nogel, 1999)
    - Men report higher lifetime exposure to racism (Moody-Ayers, Stewart, Covinsky, and Inouye, 2005)
  - Racial/ethnic identity
    - African Americans use spiritual and religious coping
    - African Americans use social support (family) in crisis

Conclusions

- Older African American men diagnosed with cancer do report experiencing everyday racism

- Similar trend of coping found in previous research was also found in this study, however older African American men used Focusing on the Positive more and Seek and Use Social Support less

- Race-related stress significantly correlates with the coping styles used by older African American men diagnosed with cancer

- Need for more research to better understand these associations and this population in order to deliver culturally competent care and hopefully improve survivorship among older African American men

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