PERCEPTIONS AND COPING AMONG LATINO MALES DIAGNOSED WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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The American Diabetes Association (2016) reported that in 2012, 9.3% of the American population had a diagnosis of diabetes. Diabetes has been linked to different complications such as kidney disease, amputation, blindness, and even death (American Diabetes Association, 2016).

Diabetes has been classified as the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. It was reported in 2010 that 234,051 death certificates had listed diabetes as an underlying cause of death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

When looking at the different populations in the United States one of the top population groups who has been struggling with diabetes is Latinos. The American Diabetes Association (2016) reported Latinos have a higher risk of developing diabetes in comparison to non-Latino white.

Latinos have a higher occurrence of experiencing complications and other worse outcomes in comparison to non-Latinos whites (Mainous, Diaz, & Geesey, 2008). Thus, Latinos’ quality of care for diabetes continues to fall behind than non-Latino whites (Mainous, et al., 2008).
SOCIAL WORK RELEVANCE

It is the responsibility of social workers to work with at-risk, vulnerable, and deprived populations (National Association of Social Workers, 2008), such as Latino men who have been diagnosed with diabetes and who may be also trying to cope with depression (Black, Markides, & Ray, 2003). It is also the duty of social workers to work knowledgeably with these populations, empathizing with the distinctive problems they are facing as they work toward progress in their lives (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).
CROSS-CULTURAL RELEVANCE

The Latino population continues to struggle with the issue of diabetes since they are one of the leading populations in the United States at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The psychological stress of having an illness can increase when the illness is not being treated properly and is causing the individual to experience complications. Some of the psychological stressors that the Latino populations are currently struggling with are anxiety and different levels of depression (Black et al., 2003). Moreover, the issue of diabetes is not only a biological and psychological concern but has become a social issue. Many Latinos are facing barriers and limitation to the medical attention that they are receiving in comparison to non-Latino whites (Fortmann et al., 2010). This can impact the individual’s quality of life and diabetes management.
METHODS

Sample/Sampling Method

• In order to be suitable for this research, participants had to be men who self-identified as Latinos, were at least 18 years of age, and have been diagnosed with diabetes for a minimum of two years.

• The participants were retrieved through a non-probability snowball sampling method.

• The researcher contacted a total of 14 possible participants, and out of the 14, 10 participated in the research, yielding a response rate of 71%.

• The participants all resided in the Los Angeles, CA area. Their ages ranged from 38 to 68 years.

Data Collection Procedures

• An interview guide of 15 semi-structured questions was used to explore the perspective and coping skills among Latino men who are diagnosed with diabetes.

• Two versions of the instrument, Spanish and English, were designed by the researcher, thus, they have no known reliability or validity. Both versions of the instrument were utilized in this study.
METHODS CONTINUED

Qualitative Interview Guide

1. How many times per year do you visit a medical doctor to monitor your diabetes?
2. Do you believe that anything about the Latino culture has affected the way you view diabetes?
3. Being a Latino male, what has been the hardest part about having diabetes?
4. How has your quality of life change since being diagnosed with diabetes?
5. When you are feeling sad or stressed out, who do you usually go to for support?
6. What are some coping skills that you do to help keep your diabetes under control?

Data Analysis

• The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions were used as the data for the analysis.
• The researcher utilized a grounded theory approach.
• The present study found that Latino men who were diagnosed with diabetes were experiencing various challenges with trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle to help better manage their diabetes. The men (80%) felt that their culture had a strong influence on their perspectives of diabetes and their attitudes and feelings towards their sources of support, quality of life, and coping skills.

• Regarding their perspectives on the illness, the men felt a strong correlation between culture and its impact on their diabetes. Many expressed that the eating habits they had established as children contributed to their development of the illness. While growing up the men felt that they were not usually given healthy meals and were not taught about portion control.

• When it came to the impression of **azucar, nervios, and susto** not all of the men in the present study associated the terms with the development of diabetes. Several mentioned that because they learned about diabetes later in life, this shaped their perceptions of the illness.
• Regarding quality of life due to being a Latino male, many expressed challenges with eating healthy food, showing vulnerability towards their symptoms, and having to balance their responsibilities.

• The men in the present study reported their spouses/partners and other family members as their primary sources of support. This took the form of support for eating more healthily, reminding them to take their medication, checking in with how they are managing their diabetes, and helping them when they were feeling stressed.

• Participants did not view their friends as strong support unless if their friends also had diabetes. As a result, they expressed having feelings of isolation and loneliness after being diagnosed with diabetes.

• The men also described various forms of coping skills to help relieve feelings of sadness and stress. The men expressed that, even though, they were performing coping skills to help manage their diabetes, they were still having difficulty being consistent.
DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

- Based on the findings of this study, social workers should take into account the lifestyle of Latino men with diabetes and the various barriers they are facing. Social workers should not only provide health education to Latino men with diabetes, but it should also provide health education to the family members. This approach is important because it would not only help the individual with diabetes, but also the family who are providing support to their family member who has diabetes.

- It is also important to note that many of the men had difficulty expressing their feelings regarding their struggles with managing their diabetes. They communicated that they were raised to not express their feelings or show signs of vulnerability. Identifying this lack of expressing emotion towards their illness is valuable information for social workers who work with male Latinos, especially those who work in medical settings. This knowledge can help in developing appropriate techniques to help facilitate a safe context for Latino men to talk openly about their feelings.


