

Latinas Delay Seeking Care, Even if Insured and Ill

June 4 2010, By Valerie DeBenedette

Delays in seeking health care appear to be common for Latino women in upstate New York, a new study finds.

In the latest issue of the journal [Ethnicity](#) & Disease, about 70 percent of a group of mostly Caribbean Latinas in the Albany area reported they put off getting health care. Insurance did not seem to be an issue, since 80 percent had insurance, yet 60 percent of the women said that they had a prior chronic medical condition.

Putting off necessary care can lead to complications, increase the cost of any eventual care and prolong pain and suffering.

The new findings came from a survey of 287 Latinas, most of whom were of Puerto Rican descent, living in four counties around Albany.

Several factors were associated with delaying health care, the study found. These included being single, divorced or widowed; preferring to have a Latino health professional; using alternative medicine; and having a previous discriminatory [health care](#) experience.

That women who know they have chronic health problems delay getting care is problematic, said Janine Jurkowski, Ph.D., a study co-author and an assistant professor at the University at Albany School of Public Health. “That was one of the surprising and striking findings,” she said.

This finding also troubled Chandra Ford, Ph.D., an assistant professor at

UCLA's School of Public Health, who said that such delays might be due to difficulties with mobility and transportation experienced by chronically ill people. Eliminating these delays "would only be a benefit for the individuals and their families in terms of reducing cost," Ford said.

Jurkowski said that Upstate New York is becoming a "new Latino destination," an area seeing a rapid growth in the Hispanic population, which means that the area has fewer health professionals familiar with Latinos than other areas. "Some of the behaviors and perceived discriminations seen in this study are more generalizable to other new Latino destinations," she said.

"The study's focus on issues affecting Puerto Ricans is important and valuable," Ford said. "Too often there is a drive to group minorities into the existing broad racial or ethnic categories, but doing so can mask important differences within and among Latinos."

This study used community-based participatory research, which allows members of a community to become involved with the research process.

"I thought it was really great that the authors used it and that they explained specific ways their work with community helped them modify the questions they were asking," Ford said.

More information: Insaf TZ, Jurkowski JM, Alomar L. Sociocultural factors influencing delay in seeking routine health care among Latinas: A community-based participatory research study. *Ethnicity Dis*: 20(2), 2010.

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