

New study shines light on barriers to diabetes care in NYC Bangladeshi community

March 14 2012

A new research survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Asian American Health at NYU Langone Medical Center shows the Bangladeshi community in New York City experiences numerous barriers to diabetes care because of limited English proficiency and lack of diabetes awareness. The study, published in the March 2012 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, also found the Bangladeshi community has an interest in participating in community health programs for diabetes prevention and care.

"We need to improve [diabetes prevention](#), and disease management through community-level, culturally tailored interventions among Bangladeshi patients in New York City," said lead author Nadia Islam, PhD, and principal investigator of the NIH-funded study. "Our new study provides important insight into [health disparities](#) in the Bangladeshi community. This study represents the first attempt to document [diabetes prevalence](#) and disease management in this population."

New York City is home to the largest Bangladeshi population in the United States with 28,000 community members. According to the United States Census Bureau, the Bangladeshi community is the fastest growing Asian American subgroup in the U.S. High rates of diabetes have been documented in the Bangladeshi populations located in England and Canada but current [health data](#) about the U.S. Bangladeshi population has been limited.

To gain an in-depth understanding of barriers to [diabetes care](#) researchers conducted focus groups with 47 Bangladeshi women and men living in New York City and surveys with 169 Bangladeshi community members. In the study, researchers found 26 percent of respondents had diabetes. Of those with diabetes, 95 percent of respondents did not know about an important blood test used to determine how well a person's diabetes is controlled. In addition, "one-third of respondents reported never reading calorie labels to choose more [nutritious food](#), and the majority of [study participants](#) did not report consuming the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables per day or engaging in structured physical exercise." The study identified the majority of responders had low rates of English proficiency, annual income less than \$25,000, sedentary occupations and difficulty navigating the health care system. Additional barriers include the overconsumption of traditional Bengali meals high in fat and red meat and the lack of time to cook healthy meals at home. However, study results show a high willingness among survey responders to participate in community health programs.

"We need to reduce healthcare disparities in the Bangladeshi community," said Chau Trinh-Shevrin, DrPH, co-principal investigator for the Center for the Study of Asian American Health at NYU Langone. "There are many challenges the Bangladeshi community faces and we need to address these barriers and increase awareness about diabetes and the importance of practicing a healthy lifestyle. Community health programs and workers can help play a diverse role in improving this community's health to engage the community with necessary health information, social support and assistance navigating the health care system to improve care among this population of Asian Americans."

Provided by New York University School of Medicine

Citation: New study shines light on barriers to diabetes care in NYC Bangladeshi community (2012, March 14) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-03-barriers-diabetes-nyc-bangladeshi.html>

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