

Hispanic breast cancer survivors' perception of health affected by English-language proficiency

October 29 2012

Hispanic breast cancer survivors who considered their English-language proficiency as limited were less likely to rate their own health as good, very good or excellent, according to data presented at the Fifth AACR Conference on The Science of Cancer Health Disparities, held here Oct. 27-30, 2012. However, the association between English-language proficiency and self-rated health was not found in women who had higher spiritual well-being, as measured by their sense of peace or meaning.

Self-rated health is a single-item question that asks people to rate their health on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, according to the researchers.

"Even though it is a single-item question, in large [epidemiological studies](#) of mostly non-Hispanic white participants, it has been shown to be highly predictive of morbidity and mortality in chronic disease," said Maria Garcia-Jimenez, a student at the University of California Berkeley/University of California San Francisco Joint Medical Program.

To examine the association between various acculturation measures, particularly English-language proficiency, and self-rated health, Garcia-Jimenez and colleagues conducted a secondary analysis of data from a telephone survey of 330 [breast cancer survivors](#) who identified themselves as Hispanic.

The average age of the women surveyed was 58.3 years. Nearly all of the women had been diagnosed with [breast cancer](#) within the past five years. About 40 percent of the women reported speaking English not at all, poorly or fairly well.

About 25 percent of the women self-rated their health as poor or fair. Those women who were proficient in English were more than twice as likely to rank their health as good, very good or excellent compared with women with limited English-language proficiency.

The researchers then evaluated whether cancer "self-efficacy," or an individual's perception of their ability to manage the [repercussions](#) of their disease, attenuated these findings.

"We found that if women had greater cancer self-efficacy, the effect of language on self-rated health was eliminated," Garcia-Jimenez said.

"Regardless of their language ability, having a high cancer self-efficacy was associated with higher self-rated health."

In addition, researchers examined two elements of spiritual well-being, faith and sense of peace/meaning, and their effects on self-rated health. Data indicated that faith was not associated with English-language proficiency or self-rated health, but the sense of peace/meaning was highly associated with self-rated [health](#), according to Garcia-Jimenez.

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

Citation: Hispanic breast cancer survivors' perception of health affected by English-language proficiency (2012, October 29) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-hispanic-breast-cancer-survivors-perception.html>

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