

Language barrier blocks epidural use in childbirth: study

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Efforts needed to inform Spanish-speaking women about their pain relief options, research suggests.

(HealthDay)—Language barriers may help explain why Hispanic women in the United States are less likely than white women to receive an epidural for pain relief during childbirth, a new study finds.

Epidurals are the most effective way to manage pain during labor and delivery, but past studies show that Hispanic women have the lowest rates of epidural use.

For the new study, Northwestern University researchers analyzed the medical records of more than 1,400 Hispanic women who gave birth at a large urban maternity hospital. Spanish-speaking Hispanic women were less likely than English-speaking Hispanic women to receive an epidural

(66 percent versus 81 percent, respectively), the investigators found.

In addition, the findings showed that 96 percent of all women who requested an epidural received one, which suggests that the hospital system is not responsible for the lower epidural rate among Spanish-speaking Hispanic women.

The findings are scheduled for presentation Saturday at the annual meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists in Washington, D.C.

"The study is important because it reveals a [health care delivery](#) disparity among Hispanic women based on [spoken language](#)," study author Dr. Paloma Toledo, of the department of anesthesiology and program for [health equity](#) at Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, said in a society news release.

"These findings, along with future research, will help us identify and target interventions, whether they are at the system, provider or patient level, to better educate Spanish-speaking [Hispanic women](#) about their pain relief options during labor," she added.

The data and conclusions of research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The Nemours Foundation has more about dealing with [pain during childbirth](#).

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