

Parental misconceptions about antibiotics linked to poor health literacy levels in Latino population

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In the first study of its kind, researchers at the Columbia University School of Nursing have established that poor health literacy among Latino parents is associated with a poor understanding of the proper use antibiotics, particularly for upper respiratory infections (URIs), which can lead to an increase in antimicrobial resistance.

The study was published in the *Journal of Urban Health of the New York Academy of Medicine*.

Conducted in the predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods of upper Manhattan where "bodegas" offer easy access to unregulated antibiotics, the study found one in three participants had poor [health literacy](#) when measured by reading comprehension, and even lower scores when measured by numerical proficiency. In addition, those with inadequate health literacy levels held incorrect beliefs about the use of antibiotics. Latinos are more likely to take antibiotics without a prescription, previous research has shown, since many have emigrated from countries where it is common to buy antibiotics over the counter without prescription. URIs are caused by viral infections and are not responsive to antibiotics which are used to treat bacteria-borne illness.

Health literacy requires the skills to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways that promote and maintain health. Evidence suggests that [Latino parents](#) with limited English proficiency are more likely to

have inadequate health literacy. Additionally, Latino parents have been shown to be significantly more likely to expect antibiotic treatment for a child in comparison to non-Hispanic white parents.

"Injudicious use of antibiotics, including antimicrobial treatment of viral URI in pediatric settings, has contributed to the [public health threat](#) of antimicrobial resistance," write the study's lead author, Ann-Margaret Dunn-Navarra, Columbia University School of Nursing. "Enhanced parent education on appropriate antibiotic treatment is critical if the [health disparities](#) in children of minority families are going to be corrected."

Provided by Columbia University Medical Center

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