

Researchers find moderate vascular risk in southwest native population

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In a newly published, pilot study in the journal *Ethnicity & Disease*, researchers report a relatively low prevalence of vascular risk among participants of the Southwest Heart Mind Study, especially among those treated for hypertension and hyperlipidemia despite overweight and obesity.

Researchers Deborah Gustafson, PhD, MS, and Francine Gachupin, PhD, MPH, led the research team comprising both academic researchers and tribal program personnel. The research results were gained from culturally fair instruments and the collection of several biomarkers (physical measurements, blood chemistries, etc.). The research identified cognitive and depressive symptoms as well as cardiovascular, lifestyle, and demographic factors of 37 Southwest Tribal elders aged 55 years and older.

Dr. Gustafson is professor of neurology at SUNY Downstate Medical Center and Dr. Gachupin is assistant director of the University of Arizona Cancer Center's Cancer Health Disparities Program and the Native American Research and Training Center.

The researchers note that American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities in the United States are aging; the older AIAN population (Non-Hispanic and Hispanic) was 212,605 in 2007 and is projected to reach almost 918,000 by 2050. The Southwest US is home to most AI communities. Accompanying aging is a profound increase in vascular and metabolic diseases - many due to obesity. Among AIANs, the study

team expects to identify 23,850 persons age 65 years and older as having had dementia in 2010, a number they expect to increase to 100,980 by 2050.

The researchers conducted a pilot survey, the Southwest Heart Mind Study (SHMS), to ascertain the feasibility of assessing cognitive and depressive symptoms, and cardiovascular, lifestyle, and demographic factors. They measured demographic, social network, and risk factor surveys; tests of cognition, depression and anxiety; physical measurements; blood biochemistries; and APOE genotyping. The Southwest Tribe within the study is from the Albuquerque Area (AA) of the Indian Health Service. At the time of this survey there were 19% (16,293/86,000) of individuals age 50 years and older in the AA. These pilot data form the basis for future investigations.

More information: Francine Gachupin et al, Cognition, Depressive Symptoms and Vascular Factors among Southwest Tribal Elders, *Ethnicity & Disease* (2016). [DOI: 10.18865/ed.26.2.235](https://doi.org/10.18865/ed.26.2.235)

Provided by SUNY Downstate Medical Center

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