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Health and wellness assessments for African Americans in targeted churches in northern Louisiana

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Purpose: African Americans (AA) have higher prevalence and mortality rates of cardiovascular disease largely due to barriers in accessing health care and disease risk factors. The purpose of this pilot study was to identify risk factor status in rural AA residents of North Louisiana, who attended target churches and compare those findings with state, regional and national norms for the AA population.

Setting/Participants: Sixty-three adults (16 men, 47 women) attending target churches in Northwest and Northeast Louisiana were recruited to participate in health screenings.

Measures: Blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, BMI, physical inactivity, smoking prevalence, and percent body fat.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to compare results to regional, state, and national norms.

Results: The cohort displayed a higher prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, physical inactivity, and percent body fat in comparison to regional, state, and national norms.

Conclusion: Results from this pilot screening demonstrate evidence of a trend of elevated health risks for development of cardiovascular disease in targeted group of AA adults. Findings indicate the need for further cultural specific wellness interventions including preventative screenings, to lower the health risks of developing chronic diseases in the AA population in Northern Louisiana. Identifying those at risk can lead to earlier diagnosis, and reduced morbidity and mortality.

Biography

Marie Vazquez Morgan earned a Bachelors of Science in Physical Therapy in 1993, a Masters in Health Sciences in 1997 from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, and her Doctorate in Health Studies from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas in 2006. She has 19 years of clinical rehabilitation experience and has been a faculty member and Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University Health in Shreveport, School of Allied Health Professions since 1997. She has presented research both nationally, internationally, and regionally at continuing education seminars. Her expertise is in neurological interventions as well as nutrition, wellness, lifestyle modification, and community rehabilitation and occupational health. She was recently featured in National Newsline Magazine for PT speaking on the role of cultural diversity in the physical therapy profession, and was honored in November 2006 by Maybelline NY as outstanding female educator of the year, and featured in People en Espanol December 2006 issue. She was also a recipient of the American Physical Therapy Association Minority Faculty Development National Scholarship in 2003.

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