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BEHAVIORAL, CHRONIC AND MENTAL HEALTH IN MINORITY WOMEN: RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL LATINO ASIAN AMERICAN STUDY

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Introduction: Asian Americans and Latino women underutilize mental health services. Studies show Asian American women have higher depression scores and less physical activity than their male counterparts. Ethnic minorities are deterred from seeking mental health care in a timely manner or from following appropriate treatment guidelines. Asian American women are less likely to seek mental health services compared to Latina and white women. Mental health issues in Asian and Latina women may be masked by psychosomatic complaints. Data from the National Latino Asian American Study, the first comprehensive epidemiological study of Asian Americans and Latinos in the USA.

Objectives: To examine the behavioral, chronic and mental health issues in Latina and Asian American women.

Methods: 3,012 Asian American and Latina American women from six ethnic subgroups (Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cuban, Mexican, and Puerto Rican Americans) from metropolitan areas were interviewed. Measures include behavioral, drug, chronic health conditions, and mental health issues, and frequency of health service seeking using T-tests and ANOVA.

Results: The results showed Asian Americans women have less heart disease compared with Latina American women, but higher rates of smoking. More Filipinos rated their health as "Excellent" compared with Chinese and Vietnamese, and experience less major depressive disorder than their Asian counterparts. All three Asian American subgroups experience less anxiety than Latina American women.

Conclusions: While rates of mental health problems may be low, they are unique in how they manifest themselves, and in the distinct ways in which they seek health services. There are marked differences among major ethnic subgroups.