E4  Addressing the Misperceptions of Bilingual, Monolingual Latino Parents toward the Mental Health Needs of their Children

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Salon 5
Addressing the Misperceptions of Bilingual, Monolingual Latino Parents toward the Mental Health Needs of their Children

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Demographics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>California</th>
<th>Los Angeles County</th>
<th>Ventura County</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>38,332,521</td>
<td>10,017,068</td>
<td>899,620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
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<td>Language other than English Spoken at home</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
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<td>Foreign Born Persons</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
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Overview of Diversity in the Latino Culture

- Latino/Hispanic groups differ in national origin and history and in the particular social formations within each country that shape age, gender and class relationships.
- These differences include language nuances, cultural values and beliefs, educational attainment, and attitudes towards mental health treatment.
- Additionally, there may be significant differences between individuals from different regions within the same country.
Spanish Speaking Countries

Honduras

Peru

Culture is like an Iceberg

Visible behaviors

Invisible Sources
- Values
- Beliefs
- Assumptions
People of Different Cultures & Faiths May not...

- Experience or identify the same health needs
- Communicate about health needs the same way
- Seek services in ways we expect
- Have adequate access to health insurance or health care services.
- View the role of "professional care" in ways we would hope
- Access services with same frequency or diligence; various groups are at higher risk

Truth: each Cultural Group has members who are affected by:

- Mental Illness
- Emotional Disturbances/ Developmental Disability
- Substance Abuse
- Poverty/Homelessness
- Domestic Violence
- Child Abuse/Incest/ Elder Abuse
- Anti-Social Behavior
- Combination of all the above

Common Characteristics of Latino Culture

- Sacrifice of material possessions
- Difficulty accepting help from outside family unit
- Less Confrontational (than Caucasian culture)
- Respect to persons perceived as authority figures
Characteristic of the Latino Culture

- Familism
- Bien/Mal Educado
- Collectivism
- Simpatía
- Respeto
- Importance of education
- Language
- Personal Space
- Time orientation

Traditional Causes of Mental Health Problems

- Witchcraft
- Spirits
- Germs
- Exposure to heat and cold
- Sin
- Envy
- Shame
- Fear
- Dust
- Lack of Emotional Strength

Examples of Cultural Bound Syndromes

- "Enfermedad mental” or “crisis nerviosa” is viewed in the Latino culture as less severe than being insane – “estar loco”.
- "Nervios” is a culturally acceptable and non-stigmatizing term for distress among Latinos.
- If a person is “loco” (crazy) then they have a loss of control or withdrawal.
- Delusion and hallucinations more likely have to take the form of ghost, spirits, or animals. Often incorporate elements of cultural myths, legends, and belief.
Traditional Treatments for Mental Health Problems

- Folk
- Special Ointments
- Prayer
- Candles
- Herbal teas
- Herbal baths
- Religious healers
- Family

Characteristics of the Latino Culture

- Curanderismo, a Hispanic folk healing belief system, is the basic idea that life is holistic and not artificial boundaries between mind and body exist. Ailments are treated with a combination of psychosocial interventions, mild herbs, and religion.

- Espiritismo (Spiritism) is seen as both a cause and a treatment to some Puerto Ricans. The espiritista is an accessible “treater” of mental illness, charges reasonable fees, offers solutions, speaks the same language as the client. And includes the extended family in the healing process.
Under-utilization of Mental Health Services

“Latinos have less access to mental health services than do Whites, are less likely to receive needed care, and are more likely to receive poor quality care when treated.”

Underutilization of Mental Health Services

This inequity often is a result of barriers that can best be understood as problems related to:

- Accessibility
- Availability
- Appropriateness
- Affordability
- Advocacy

Individual Barriers

- Association of mental illness as being “crazy”
- Shame and fear of being judged
- Cultural beliefs used to describe mental illness as fate (e.g. mal de ojo or susto)
- Masculinity belief that males need to assert themselves and appear as strong and in control
- Violence and trauma
- Lack of knowledge and awareness
Community Barriers

- Lack of cultural and linguistically appropriate services
- Shortage of bilingual and bicultural mental health staff
- Organizational and Systemic barriers

Societal Barriers

- Poverty
- Insurance
- Immigration status
- Geographical Isolation
- Inadequate transportation
- Cost of transportation
- Social Exclusion (poverty, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religious beliefs)

Scenario

A 10 year old Latino male referred to agency due to allegations of domestic violence. Mother reports belief in being able to physically discipline child. Mother is refusing to administer medication for his mental health illness due to belief that only “locos” suffer from mental health disorders.
Scenario

- What are the factors that as mental health providers we need to consider to help this family?

Engaging the Family

- In your experience, how do you engage the family?

Key Strategies for Engagement

- Make attempt to speak with both parents
- Be polite and formal
- Show care and concern
- Be respectful and honest (e.g. learn how to pronounce the individual's names)
- Be respectful of beliefs about causes of illness
- Ask questions about cultural norms
- Consideration of educational level of the families- writing, verbal and nonverbal, and visual process
- Reassure families that asking for help is difficult, but acceptable
Things to Consider:

- Help remove barriers in order to facilitate family and significant others can join the assessment and healing process
- Family often has power to effect change for client, especially in cultures in which client has duty to follow family’s wishes
- If family does not support treatment changes for success are minimal
- Role of elders and family members
- Prayer service
- Role of folk healer (curandero) as part of the family’s natural supports
- Avoidance/mistrust of Western medicine

Recommendations

- See through their life experience
  - Cumulative effect of resource disparities, language, racism, and other hardships that impact the mental health of Latinos
  - Opportunities to engage in Latino-specific mental health trainings
  - Spanish mental health related term and contextual meaning
  - Become cognizant of stigma associated with mental health illness in the Latino community
  - Explain the importance of treatment and develop confianza (trust) between the patient and the provider
  - Normalize mental health illness by informing of prevalence to minimize isolation and fear

Preguntas? Comentarios?
References

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www.casapacifica.org

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