

EVIDENCE- BASED CARE SHEET

Hispanic American Patients: Providing Culturally Competent Care

What We Know

Geographic Origin and Current Demographic Information

- Although “Hispanic” and “Latino” are general terms that are often used interchangeably to describe people from Mexico, Central America, and certain Caribbean and South American countries, they are not synonymous. Latino, which is a shortened form of *latino americano*, is a term that is gaining acceptance among Hispanics and generally refers more exclusively to persons of Latin American origin, including persons from the Caribbean. In keeping with the most recent United States Census, the term Hispanic is not defined by race or language, and will be used throughout this paper to describe individuals of any race whose origin or descent is from Hispanic roots^(5,20,38,48)
- The 2010 U.S. Census reported that Hispanics represent approximately 16% of the population (50.5 million people), which is up from 13% of the population (35.5 million people) in 2000. Hispanics have grown to become the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S.; African Americans are the largest racial minority. The Hispanic population is expected to be 30% of the U.S. population by 2050. The bulk of the population increase is the result of immigration rather than native birth; during the period 2005–2007, 47% of the Hispanic population in the U.S. was foreign born. The majority of Hispanics in the U.S. are of Mexican origin (63%), followed by those from Puerto Rico (9.6%), Central and South America (8.6%), and Cuba (3.5%). Many Hispanics claim a multicultural background. Approximately 75% of Hispanics live in California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, and Colorado. Although not all Hispanics speak Spanish and there is great linguistic diversity among those who do speak Spanish (e.g., 62 dialects are spoken in Mexico), the major unifying element among all Hispanic nationalities is the Spanish language^(2,15,18,26,28,30,35,38,48,54,59,60)
- According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population is significantly younger than the general U.S. population except for Cuban-Americans, who have a higher proportion of older adults. The median age of Hispanics in the U.S. was recorded to be 27.2 years as compared with 40.4 years for non-Hispanic Whites. However, the number of older Hispanics is expected to increase from less than 1.8 million in 2000 to more than 8.6 million in 2030. Approximately 60% of Hispanics who are 25 years of age and older were high school graduates, and about 12% hold a bachelor’s degree or a higher degree. Despite educational achievement, Hispanics have lower earnings than the general population. In 2007, the poverty rate for Hispanics was 21% compared with 8% for Whites. An estimated 32% of Hispanics, including 19% of Hispanic children, do not have health insurance^(9,12,29,42,43,52,54,60,62)
- Hispanics are united more by culture and geography than by biology, and there are great sociocultural and socioeconomic variables among nationalities and intergenerational issues that influence migration and acculturation. Acculturation is defined as the extent to which a minority group adopts cultural aspects of the host country or dominant group while retaining its native culture; acculturation can result in having a bi-cultural experience. Assimilation occurs when the native culture is replaced by the mainstream

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culture. The trend that best characterizes the experience among recently immigrated Hispanics is acculturation instead of assimilation^(4,20,25,48,59)

- Political and economic climates have shaped the social positions of the different Hispanic groups and influenced their experiences in the U.S. For example, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, over one million Mexican Americans were deported, 60% of whom were U.S. citizens. Cubans immigrating as a result of the 1959 revolution were welcomed, granted refugee status, and given preferential treatment under immigration laws, in large part because they were perceived as well-educated professionals. When the U.S. economy was struggling in the 1970s and 1980s, the same social and legal support was not extended to immigrants from Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador who fled their countries due to civil war and human rights abuse. Later, Mexican immigration was met with strong anti-immigrant sentiment (e.g., a 2005 bill, H.R. 4437 that was sponsored by Rep. Sensenbrenner [R-WI], would have made every undocumented immigrant a felon)^(20,47)
- Culturally, Hispanics tend to be group oriented and are characterized by close-knit families that support the concept of *familismo*, a term that is used in the Hispanic community to describe the priority of family over individual needs. *Familismo* encourages interdependence, cooperation, strong relationships, loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity in the family. Other defining characteristics include *respeto* (i.e., respect toward others, especially older adult males, persons of higher social or economic status, and persons of authority), *personalismo* (i.e., an emphasis on family relationships and the importance of personal relationships rather than institutional relationships), and *confianza* (i.e., the confidence, including trust, that is given to family members or earned by individuals outside the family)^(25,27,42,43,59,62)
- **Prominent Health Conditions/Risk of Health Conditions**
 - Researchers have found that compared with non-Hispanic Whites, adult Hispanics in the U.S. are more likely to die from