

Social support as a moderator of physical disability and mental health in older Vietnamese immigrants in the U.S.: Results from the Vietnamese Aging and Care Survey (VACS)

Christina E. Miyawaki; Minhui Liu; Van Ta Park; Mindy Thy Tran;
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WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- The Vietnamese American population is the fourth largest Asian-American sub-group in the U.S., yet research on the health of this population is sparse compared to other ethnic minorities
- Due to their unique immigration history, many older Vietnamese immigrants have experienced significant mental and physical trauma
- Older Vietnamese Americans have been found to have the highest Activities of Daily Living (ADL) disability rates among all Asian American populations
- The Vietnamese Aging and Care Survey (VACS) was developed to help bridge the gap of knowledge on the role of social factors shaping associations between physical and mental health among this population

HOW WAS THIS RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- The Hispanic Established Populations for Epidemiological Studies of the Elderly (H-EPESE) was used as a model to develop a culturally informed health survey measuring depression, loneliness, and receipt of social support
- Researchers received the support of a Vietnamese Community Advisory Board consisting of Vietnamese professionals to translate survey instruments and provide suggestions on survey questions
- Participants were identified by connecting to Vietnamese community organizations and through Vietnamese key stakeholders
- Study participants were self-identified Vietnamese adults aged 65 or older who lived in the greater Houston, Texas area (N=132)

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- Number of ADL disabilities was significantly associated with high levels of depressive symptoms and loneliness
- Among those who had more social support, ADL disabilities were associated with a lower loneliness score than those with less social support

Among older Vietnamese Americans, having more physical disabilities is associated with greater depressive symptoms and loneliness, while more social support was shown to moderate the effect of physical disability on loneliness

ACTION STEPS

By recognizing the family unit as a vital source of support, healthcare professionals can facilitate access to more services to benefit Vietnamese older adults' physical and mental health.

It is imperative for healthcare providers to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to increase access and foster healthcare environments that will lead to better outcomes for Vietnamese older adults.



CONTINUE READING

Full Article

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About Dr. Christina E. Miyawaki
uh.edu/socialwork/about/faculty-directory/c-miyawaki/