Articles Summarised

» The protective role of optimism and self-esteem on depressive symptom pathways among Canadian Aboriginal youth
» Antenatal depression in a multi-ethnic, community sample of Canadian immigrants: psychosocial correlates and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis function
» A systematic review of factors affecting migrant attitudes towards seeking psychological help
» Risk indicators of suicide ideation among on-reserve First Nations youth
» Mental health help-seeking attitudes, utilization, and intentions among older Chinese immigrants in Canada

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We want your opinion about our newsletter! Please complete our brief survey by June 20, 2013 to let us know how we are doing. Information collected is confidential and your participation is voluntary. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your input.

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Introduction

This newsletter provides a brief summary of some of the latest research and publications that may be of interest to practitioners in the field of addiction and mental health. Each newsletter will cover one of the themes of the Alberta Addiction and Mental Health Research Partnership Program and provides structured accounts of research on a given topic, based on a limited search of the literature for recent publications. We do not thoroughly assess the quality of the research identified so this publication acts as a signpost for further reading and assessment, rather than as a definitive account of what should be included in clinical practice.

This month’s edition focuses on Aboriginal and Multicultural Populations.

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The protective role of optimism and self-esteem on depressive symptom pathways among Canadian Aboriginal youth

Study Design: Longitudinal cohort study

Focus of the Study: Aboriginal youth are at increased risk for developing depression and substance use problems. This study aimed to describe the pathways of depressive symptoms from adolescence into young adulthood (12 to 23 years old) for off-reserve Aboriginal youth in Canada. In particular, the study used results from a subsample of four cycles of a national survey to examine potential gender differences and the influence of alcohol use, self-esteem and optimism on depressive symptoms.

Key Findings:
» Heavy drinking was identified as a risk factor for depressive symptoms, while higher levels of self-esteem and optimism were found to be protective factors against depressive symptoms in this sample.
» The developmental trajectory for depressive symptoms differed by gender after adjustment for selected risk and protective factors. Girls had higher initial levels of depressive symptoms that remained elevated throughout adolescence and into young adulthood. Boys had very low levels of depressive symptoms until age 14 which then sharply increased, peaking at late adolescence (i.e., 17-18), followed by a sharp decrease into young adulthood (i.e., ages 21-23).

Implications for Practice: High self-esteem and optimism may provide a protective role in the development of depressive symptoms in early adolescent Aboriginal youth. Nurturing these factors in early intervention and prevention programs may be useful in protecting against the development of depressive symptoms.

Link to full abstract

Antenatal depression in a multi-ethnic, community sample of Canadian immigrants: psychosocial correlates and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis function

Study Design: Cross-sectional study

Focus of the Study: Prenatal depressive symptoms are more common in immigrant women living in Canada than Canadian-born women. There is a lack of research into the psychosocial factors that impact the development of depression in this population. This study examined whether certain psychosocial factors, as well as an altered hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis activity (as a physiological factor), are associated with prenatal depressive symptomatology.

Key Findings:
» 17% of the study participants had high levels of prenatal depressive symptoms; these women reported more perceived stress, somatic symptoms, lower social support and were less likely to be attending work or school during pregnancy.
» High levels of prenatal depressive symptoms were associated with elevated nighttime cortisol levels (a measure of HPA axis activity); however, stressful life events were not associated with a change in the measured HPA axis activity. These results are exploratory and further research is needed to examine HPA axis activity in relation to stressful life events in this population.

Implications for Practice: High levels of prenatal depressive symptoms are common in immigrant women living in Canada. Findings from this preliminary study indicate risk factors may include increased somatic symptoms and lack of regular activities (work or school) in early pregnancy. Clinicians should consider translation and interpretation services to aid in screening for depressive symptoms in this vulnerable population.

Link to full abstract
A systematic review of factors affecting migrant attitudes towards seeking psychological help

Study Design: Systematic review

Focus of the Study: Health service utilization by migrant groups is low despite comparatively higher levels of psychological distress than the general population. This study reviewed qualitative and quantitative research that examined factors associated with attitudes toward seeking psychological help in working age migrants.

Key Findings:
- 8 quantitative and 16 qualitative studies on a diverse range of migrant groups were included in the review and the majority of these studies were from North America.
- There was a considerable amount of variation among the quantitative studies; however, the following factors were associated with favorable attitudes toward seeking psychological help: acculturation, psychological attribution of distress, higher educational levels, higher socioeconomic status, female gender and older age.
- The following major themes related to migrants’ help-seeking attitudes emerged from the qualitative studies: 1) logistical barriers to accessing services (e.g., insufficient information, financial barriers and lack of health insurance), 2) cultural mismatch between service providers and participants, and 3) preference for other sources of assistance (e.g., preference for solving problems independently or seeking help from informal sources or traditional healers).

Implications for Practice: Migrant groups often perceive that services lack cultural sensitivity and do not meet their needs and migrants often face logistical barriers to accessing services. It is important that clinicians educate themselves about the cultural values of migrant clients whom they treat. They should ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and adapted to meet the needs of migrant groups; this may involve collaboration with community organizations. The findings of this study need to be interpreted cautiously, as migrants from a wide range of cultural groups were included and findings that are specific to some cultural groups can not necessarily be generalized to all migrant populations.

Link to full abstract

Risk indicators of suicide ideation among on-reserve First Nations youth

Study Design: Cross-sectional survey

Focus of the Study: Suicide mortality rates in Canadian Aboriginal youth are disproportionately higher than the general population. Little research has been conducted on independent risk factors for suicidal ideation among First Nations youth living on-reserve. This study determined the prevalence of suicidal ideation and independent risk factors among Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) on-reserve First Nations youth.

Key Findings:
- Among STC on-reserve First Nations youth, 23% reported suicidal ideation during the past 12 months. In comparison, a previous study using the same questionnaire and age group, reported 9% of Saskatoon urban youth and 19% of Saskatoon urban Aboriginal youth experienced suicidal ideation in the previous year.
- The prevalence of suicidal ideation was higher among girls than boys (30% versus 15%), and higher in youth living with both a father and mother than those who had different living arrangements (32% versus 16%).
- Prevalence of suicidal ideation was also higher among those who had depressed mood (46% versus 13%) and those with low self-esteem (44% versus 19%). Engaging in risky behaviours (i.e., smoking cigarettes, abusing alcohol and using marijuana) was associated with suicidal ideation as well.
There were no significant associations between suicidal ideation and grade, age, parental employment status, parental education level, or measured cultural variables. In addition, being bullied was not associated with suicidal ideation among this population.

After statistical adjustments were made, the only significant, independent risk factors linked with suicidal ideation were: wanting to leave home, being depressed, and not feeling loved.

**Implications for Practice:** Understanding the prevalence and independent risk factors of suicidal ideation among First Nations youth living on-reserve is an important step in suicide prevention and intervention. The findings from this study indicate that parent-child relationships (e.g., youth wanting to leave home and not feeling loved) and depression may be important risk factors for mental health providers to target in intervention efforts.

**Mental health help-seeking attitudes, utilization, and intentions among older Chinese immigrants in Canada**


**Study Design:** Cross-sectional study

**Focus of the Study:** Mental health care utilization rates tend to be lower among seniors than what is reported in the younger, general population. Ethnic minority seniors may have cultural values or beliefs that can further contribute to lower utilization rates. This study examined the extent to which health and cultural variables influenced mental health help-seeking attitudes among older Chinese immigrants in Canada. Mental health utilization and intentions to use mental health services in the future were also measured.

**Key Findings:**

- Higher levels of perceived social support, better physical health, and lower endorsement of Chinese cultural beliefs and values were associated with more positive mental health help-seeking attitudes among participants.
- Of the 149 participants, 16% reported seeking help for emotional or mental health issues in the past year. 8% of participants spoke with a non-professional (friend, family member, clergy), 5% consulted a family physician, and 3% talked with both a family physician and a non-professional. Help-seeking attitudes, however, did not predict mental health care utilization.
- The likelihood of seeking future mental health services varied depending on the type of service provider considered. Participants favoured taking care of problems by themselves over seeking help from close friends and family; whereas help from close friends and family was preferred over help from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or counselor. Furthermore, seeking help from a general practitioner was favoured over seeing a psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, or close friends and family.

**Implications for Practice:** The findings from this study suggest that older Chinese immigrants may hold strong cultural beliefs that could negatively impact the likelihood they will seek help for mental health problems. This population may benefit from tailored educational outreach efforts with existing community supports to raise mental health awareness and reduce associated stigma.

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Please note that Bridging the Gap will be on hiatus over the summer and will return in the fall. Have a wonderful summer!

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