

Heart Disease and Stroke Risk Higher in Latinos

Experts emphasize the health benefits that stem from culturally tailored care and racial/ethnic concordance between patients and physicians.

September 22, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Cardiovascular disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death among Latinos. Experts attribute this disparity in part to language barriers that stem from a lack of diverse racial and ethnic representation in health care, [ABC News reports](#).

In the United States, about 52% of Latino men and 43% of Latinas live with cardiovascular disease, according to the study published in [Current Cardiovascular Risk Reports](#).

Claudia Serrano-Gomez, MD, a cardiologist at NYU Langone Health noted on Good Morning America that many Latino immigrants struggle to adjust to the American lifestyle. “They don’t speak the language,” she said. “They are not aware of how to change from their lifestyle in their countries to the lifestyle here.”

What’s more, Cynthia Lebron, an assistant professor and prevention scientist at the University of Miami, told ABC News that patient-physician concordance results in better health outcomes as well as better relationships between providers and patients. In other words, the patient-physician relationship is stronger when patients perceive their physicians to be similar to them in terms of race/ethnicity or culture.

She added that without diversity in health care providers, patients will not receive the best care. “It’s not just language,” she said. “it’s cultural.”

A [study conducted earlier this year](#) found that one in four Americans skip regular checkups because they feel healthy. Among Latinos surveyed, 31% indicated language as a barrier to preventive care. In fact, 72% of Latinos reported avoiding a wellness screening for this reason.

In acknowledgement of National Hispanic Heritage Month, observed annually from September 15 to October 15, the [American Stroke Association](#) (ASA) reminds individuals to become familiar with RÁPIDO, an acronym ASA developed to raise awareness of stroke signs in Spanish-speaking communities. RÁPIDO (“fast” in Spanish) is a play on FAST, which stands for face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty and time to call 911).

RÁPIDO stands for:

R - Rostro caído (face drooping)

Á - Alteración del equilibrio (loss of balance or lack of coordination)

P - Pérdida de fuerza en el brazo (arm weakness)

I - Impedimento visual repentino (sudden vision difficulty)

D - Dificultad para hablar (slurred or strange speech)

O - Obtén ayuda, llama al 911 (get help, call 911)

To learn more, click [#Stroke](#) or [#Cardiovascular](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Combating Hypertension in Vulnerable California Communities](#)," "[Cardiovascular Disease Is Primed to Kill More Older Adults, Especially Blacks and Hispanics](#)" and "[Campaign Aims to Reduce Stress in Latinos](#)."

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