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28th Annual Research Day

May 2nd, 12:00 AM

Barriers to Healthcare Access Between English and Spanish Speakers in an Underserved Population

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Javed, Adeena; Johnson, Dale; Rivera-Colón, Gerardo J.; Byrnes, Nathaniel J.; Bertsch, Kristin; and Jones, Anne C., "Barriers to Healthcare Access Between English and Spanish Speakers in an Underserved Population" (2024). *Rowan-Virtua Research Day*. 151.

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Background

- According to the NJ State Department of Health, Atlantic County has higher rates of smoking, respiratory disease, hypercholesterolemia, as well as death rates due to coronary heart disease, HIV, and all cancers compared to the NJ state average^{1,2}.
- With over 20% of Atlantic County's population identifying as Hispanic, Spanish speakers encounter greater obstacles compared to their English-speaking counterparts in accessing healthcare services and improving health outcomes^{1,2}.
- Existing research indicates that various factors, including health insurance coverage, proximity to healthcare facilities, transportation options, health literacy levels, and trust in the medical profession, significantly influence access to healthcare services^{5,6}.

Methods

- Administered a standardized intake survey that assessed chronic disease states, social determinants of health, vaccination status, and additional needs of the Atlantic County population.
- Survey was conducted from October to December 2023 at multiple food distribution events throughout Atlantic County; survey respondents included English and Spanish speakers.
- The survey included type of insurance coverage, access to specific healthcare services such as mental health and dental health, transportation to medical appointments, ability to afford transcriptions, etc.

Results

- Our research illustrates that Spanish speakers in Atlantic County deal with more barriers to accessing healthcare when compared to their English-speaking counterparts.



Figure 1: Food Distribution Events where health survey was conducted

Discussion

- Barriers that Spanish-speaking residents face include transportation to doctor visits, limited access to mental health services, and overall higher rates of uninsured persons.
- Previous research has demonstrated that combating these barriers by providing transportation for patients, interpreter services, community outreach, and financial assistance has improved health outcomes in disadvantaged communities^{4,5,6}
- Limitations to our research project include small sample size, uneven distribution between Spanish and English speakers, and non-response bias which may affect the generalizability of our survey responses.

Conclusion

- It is crucial that healthcare initiatives understand barriers to accessing healthcare for Spanish speakers to ensure effective communication, improved health outcomes, and enhanced patient satisfaction.

Acknowledgements

- This research received support from the South Jersey Institute for Public Health as well as the Department of Family Medicine at Rowan-Virtua SOM.

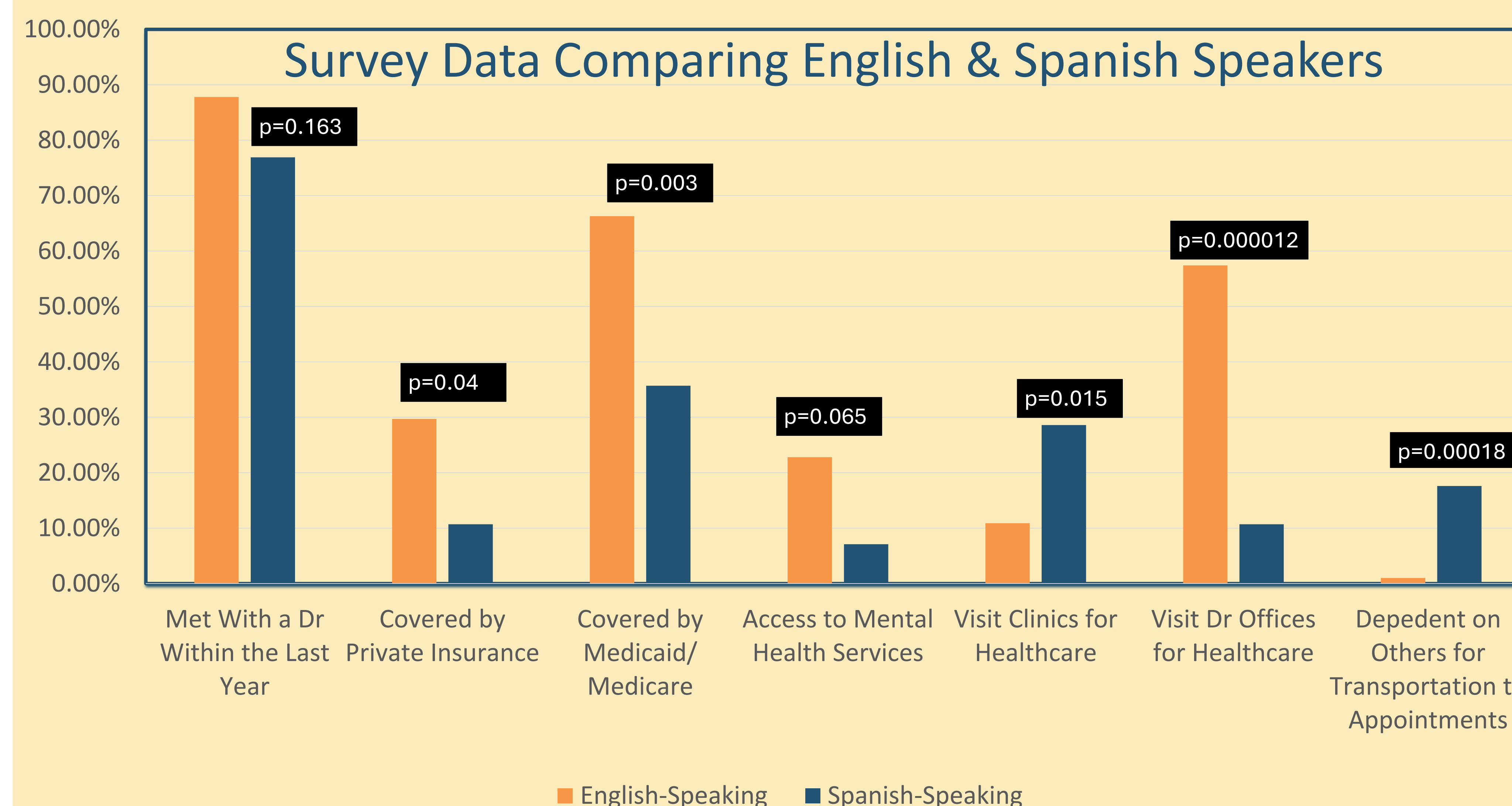


Figure 2: Survey data comparing responses between English and Spanish speakers; Total number of survey participants n=129, Number of English speakers = 101, Number of Spanish speakers = 28

References

