ASSOCIATION OF OVERWEIGHT/OBESITY AND SELF REPORTED HEALTH STATUS IN HISPANICS: A COMPARISON WITH NON HISPANIC WHITES

Connie Ingram, RN, CCRC, Maria A. Canossa-Terris, MD, Mary Comerford, MSPH, Paul A. Kurlansky, MD, Florida Heart Research Institute, Miami, Florida

Introduction
The growing global prevalence of obesity is recognized as an important risk for cardiovascular disease. Understanding self perception of weight as it pertains to health is critical to the success of weight reduction programs. The impact of ethnicity on this association has not been examined.

Methods
The sample included 927 Hispanic (H) and 72 Non-Hispanics white (NHW) adults who received free cardiovascular screening from Florida Heart Research Institute. Overweight and obesity were measured by Body Mass Index. Self-perceived health status was characterized as excellent, very good, good, fair or poor health. Logistic regression was used to determine independent risk factors for perceived fair-poor health, as well as for excellent, very good health. Odds ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals were calculated.

Results
Both H and NHW overweight/obese subjects tended to view their health as good, very good or excellent: H (overweight 81.1%/obese 73%) and NHW (89.3%/66.7%). Logistic regression revealed the following independent correlates of self-perceived very good or excellent health: NHW (OR 3.618, CI 2.126, 6.157, p<0.000) and exercise (OR 1.640;CI 1.186, 2.268; p=0.003). Hypertension (OR 0.392; CI 0.246, 0.625; p<0.001), overweight (OR 0.551, CI0.386, 0.785, p=0.001) and obesity (OR 0.431, CI 0.288, 0.644; p<0.001) were all negatively associated with very good/excellent status.

Conclusions
Although it is not surprising that participation in regular exercise is associated with a better self-perception of health status, or that hypertension and obesity is correlated with a worse self-assessed health status, there are two striking findings that emerge from this data:

1. The vast majority of both H and NHW subjects do not perceive either overweight or obesity to be a major health problem.
2. Hispanics have a significantly worse self-perception of health status even after controlling for associated factors.

This information provides a critical foundation for overcoming fundamental barriers to effective patient education—a critical first step in addressing the current epidemic of obesity in ethnically diverse populations.