Background

Our mental health greatly dictates the way we think, feel, and act. Recent statistics illustrate that African Americans are prone to having higher rates of depressive symptoms compared to other race and ethnicity groups. In a number of studies, depressive symptoms have been linked to poor health outcomes, such as cancer. Overall, studies show that among African-Americans the rates of depression, smoking, and physical inactivity are relatively high compared to other race and ethnicities. African Americans are disproportionately affected by cancer, with attention to having the highest mortality rate for all cancers amalgamated among all ethnic and racial demographics in the United States.

Specific Aims

This study seeks to explore the associations between depressive symptoms with the cancer risk factors of smoking and physical activity among African-Americans.

The primary aims of the proposed study are:

1. Examine the association between depressive symptoms and smoking.
2. Examine the association between depressive symptoms and physical activity.

The overarching hypothesis for aforementioned aims is that as depressive symptoms increase, the risk for cancer (smoking and physical inactivity) increases.

Methods

The participants analyzed in this study are from a church-based cohort of African Americans in Houston, TX recruited between 2008-2013 from.

Descriptive statistics (Table 1) were used to describe participant characteristics.

A multiple logistic regressions was performed to investigate the relationships between predictor (depressive symptoms, treated as continuous), and outcomes (smoking and physical inactivity, treated as dichotomous), controlling for covariates (age, gender, education, household income, current smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, chronic condition, marital status, and employment status).

All analyses were done using SAS 9.4

Results

Higher score of depressive symptoms was associated with increased odds of smoking (OR=1.049, 95% CI=(1.012-1.087), p-value=0.008). While, higher score of depressive symptoms was associated with increased odds of being inactive (OR=1.028, 95% CI=1.003-1.053, p-value=0.028).

Conclusion

Depressive symptoms (CES-D score) were positively associated with the known cancer risk factors of smoking and physical activity.

There needs to be more interventions and awareness on mental health, specifically in the African American community. Additionally, there needs to be more research on how depressive symptoms are directly associated with the prevalence of cancer by looking at psychological factors, biological pathways, and the iatrogenic effect of depression.

Acknowledgements

➢ Partnership for Careers in Cancer Science and Medicine Summer Program
➢ The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
➢ Mentor - Dr. Lorna Haughton McNeill

References