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Title

Self-reported health conditions and health status perceptions of Amish and Mennonite women

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Health Care Disparities

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: There is a lack of information regarding chronic health conditions among Amish and Mennonite communities.

Objective: This study aims to record the self-reported health conditions and health status perceptions of Amish and Mennonite women.

Study Design and Analysis: Project Hoffnung ("Hope"), a community-led initiative, organized free health clinics for Amish and Mennonite women in Ohio. Attendees were given the opportunity to fill out a health survey and take part in a breast cancer education program.

Setting, Dataset, Population Studied: There are Amish settlements in 34 states across the United States. Ohio is home to two of the largest communities in the world as well as conservative Mennonite communities in rural and Appalachian regions. Limited access to health education and care is a significant issue due to transportation difficulties and technology.

Intervention/Instrument/Outcome Measures: The health section of the survey included an open-ended question "What health problems do you have?". Additionally, there was an 11-item checklist of health conditions that participants could mark if they had been diagnosed by a doctor. The survey also asked participants to rate their overall health status on a five-point scale of "poor to excellent".

Results: 475 Amish and Mennonite women participated in a health clinic from October 2017-March 2019 at 16 screening events in Ohio. The mean age was 54.8 years. The mean number of health conditions reported was 1.24 conditions with a range of 0-6. The most common health conditions reported were hypertension (27.4%, n=130), thyroid disease (13.9% , n=66), and high cholesterol (13.1%, n=62). Respondents were most likely to list their health status as "Good" (43%). Not a single respondent ranked their health as poor.

Women who reported pain and/or various orthopedic conditions were more likely to rate their health as “fair/good” versus “very good/excellent” ($p=.005$ and $.007$, respectively). Conversely, high blood pressure or high cholesterol conditions were positively associated with a higher health status ($p=.014$ and $.016$, respectively).

Conclusions: Amish and Mennonite women had a relatively positive outlook on health status even with an increasing number of health conditions. Health conditions that were more likely to impact child rearing responsibilities were associated with a less positive health rating. More research is needed on addressing education and access needs for specific health issues.