

10th Conference on Health Care of the Chinese in North America

Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia in Chinese Patients



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As a major point of immigration from Pacific Rim countries, California has a higher proportion of Asian-American residents than other states, and 81% of the Chinese in California are foreign-born. Dementia affects Chinese elders with a prevalence similar to Caucasians. Physicians providing healthcare to the elderly in California will serve increasing numbers of dementing elders from Asian cultural backgrounds. However, Alzheimer's disease (AD) resources are currently underutilized by ethnic minority groups. Although Asian Pacific Islanders make up 10.8% of the population of Los Angeles County, and 70,979 Chinese elders over age 65 reside in Los Angeles County, fewer than half of the expected numbers of Chinese approach state Alzheimer's Disease Centers for diagnosis and treatment. When they do enroll in such centers, Chinese patients and caregivers are more likely to garner referrals to financial assistance and professional case management than the Caucasian majority.

The UCLA Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) Database is comprised of only 0.05% Asian Pacific Islanders. I reported results of a pilot outreach from the UCLA ADRC to the Chinese-American community of Los Angeles at the last International Conference on Health Problems Related to the Chinese in North America. Since then, the Alzheimer's Association of Los Angeles has convened focus groups to gain insights as to Asian Pacific Islander communities' perceptions of dementia burden. I will report on highlights from those focus group sessions.

Of note, dementia or Alzheimer's disease specifically does not seem to rate as a high priority concern among Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Filipino community leaders.

I will also report results of collaborative work with the Prince of Wales Hospital, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Neurobehavior Clinic, Chung-Ho Memorial Hospital in Taiwan. We have been examining the differences among our patients in behavioral disturbances and caregiver distress.

Dementia will be a significant health concern for Chinese communities internationally, but Alzheimer's disease care providers are still faced with the challenge of educating these communities on available diagnostic methodology and treatment. Treatment must include interventions to relieve caregiver distress.