



# Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices related to Chronic Diseases Among Caribbean People in Metro Atlanta

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## Background & Significance

Chronic diseases are the most common causes of premature death in the US. Every 40 seconds someone in the US will die of a heart attack and every 4 minutes someone will have a stroke. Cancer is the second leading cause of death, followed by chronic lower respiratory diseases, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes. These diseases are preventable because they are related to knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. We know that chronic diseases disproportionately affect Non-Hispanic Blacks in the US.<sup>1</sup> However, there is little information on the extent to which Non-Hispanic Black sub-groups such as people from English-Speaking Caribbean countries are affected. This study was conducted to determine the prevalence of chronic health conditions and diseases among people from English-Speaking Caribbean countries who live in the Metro Atlanta area. The study also assessed their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to these chronic health conditions. We hope that the results of this study will be used to develop chronic disease prevention and treatment programs for this and similar communities in the US.

## Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) Determine the prevalence of chronic diseases in the Metro Atlanta Caribbean population.
- 2) Determine knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices related to chronic diseases in this population.

## Methods

- ◆ This research project was reviewed and approved by the Morehouse School of Morehouse school Institutional Review Board.
- ◆ The survey questionnaire was designed by the student investigator David Daniels with assistance from Dr. Rooke and the Study Design, Biostatistics, and Data Management (SDBDM) Core of the Research Center for Clinical and Translational Research. The survey questionnaire contained 78 questions.
- ◆ Caribbean organizations in Metro Atlanta were contacted and invited to participate in the survey.
- ◆ The survey questionnaire was completed by attendees at monthly meetings of participating Caribbean organizations during June and July 2017.

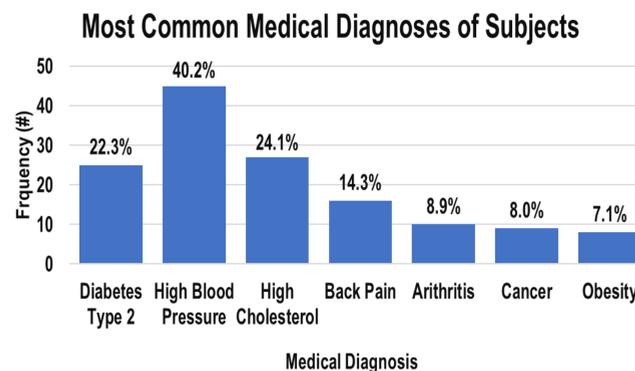
## Methods

- ◆ The organizations with the most participants involved people from Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Antigua & Barbuda.
- ◆ The data collected was entered into Red Cap data management software. Univariate and preliminary bivariate and multivariate analysis was completed using SAS 9.4



## Results

- ◆ A total of 128 subjects returned the survey and 112 subjects were included in the compiled data given no pages were inadvertently or otherwise skipped by the subject
- ◆ The mean age of subjects was 59.5 years. 64.3% were females and 35.7% were male. 92% of subjects self-identified as Black. The majority, 54.1% were married
- ◆ Subjects' country of origin: 30.4% Guyanese, 33.9% Jamaican, 12.5% Trinidadian, 2.7% Barbadian, 15.2% Antiguan and 2.7% Grenadian
- ◆ 12.5% self-identified as having fair or poor health, 87.5% had health insurance, 86.0% had a primary healthcare provider while 63% saw a primary healthcare provider at least twice a year
- ◆ 76.8% of subjects reported having at least one diagnosed chronic disease with 18.8% having three or more diagnosed chronic diseases



Note: Bars show frequency while bar labels show percent frequency

## Results

### Knowledge

- ◆ 49.4% of subjects used health professionals as their main source for health information
- ◆ 63.2% of subjects responded that one can have the early stages of a chronic disease for years before knowing it
- ◆ 29.3% of subjects responded that everyone will have health problems as they get older
- ◆ 46.0% of subjects responded that smoking is the one risk factor most likely to lead to the development of a chronic disease
- ◆ 63.6% of subjects responded that exercise and good eating habits are equally important for weight loss
- ◆ 29.6% of subjects responded that processed meats such as bacon, sausage and ham are known carcinogens
- ◆ 25.0% of subjects responded that cancer is the most common cause of death in the US

Statement	Agree %	Disagree %
I believe I am at risk for developing chronic diseases	55 (55)	45 (45)
I want to change my health behaviors	84.9 (90)	15.1 (16)
I think that changing my eating habits will reduce my risk of developing chronic diseases	84.3 (91)	15.7 (17)
I think I can prevent chronic diseases by exercising and remaining active	88.9 (97)	11.1(12)
Excess stress can cause chronic diseases or make them worse	86.4 (95)	13.6 (15)
Access to more fruits, vegetables	96.4 (106)	3.6 (4)
Awareness programs for healthy lifestyle habits	100.0 (112)	0.0 (0)

NOTE: - Actual frequencies in parentheses.  
- Total frequencies varies based on number of subjects who responded to question

Statement	Yes %	No %
I smoke cigarettes	1.8 (2)	98.2 (108)
I am exposed to second-hand smoke within my home	1.8 (2)	98.2 (108)
I sometimes binge drink or drink more than 4 or 5 alcoholic drinks within about 2-3 hours	1.8 (2)	98.2 (108)
I add additional salt to my food as I eat it	10.7 (12)	89.3 (100)
I eat at least 5 servings of fruits every day	32.1 (36)	67.9 (76)
I eat at least 5 servings of vegetables every day	33.0 (37)	67.0 (75)
I drink at least 8 cups of water a day	52.7 (58)	47.3 (52)

NOTE: - Actual frequencies in parentheses.  
- Total frequencies varies based on number of subjects who responded to question

## Conclusions

- ◆ High blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol were three most prevalent diagnoses while type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and high cholesterol were the three most common chronic disease concerns.
- ◆ Knowledge and beliefs were reflected in health behaviors related to smoking. 93% believed that smoking causes cancers and lung diseases. Smoking was selected as the most important risk factor for chronic diseases. 98% did not smoke.
- ◆ There was an interesting knowledge deficit regarding cardiovascular disease and its risk factors. 24% of participants reported having high cholesterol and 16% were worried about having a heart attack, yet only 1.8% were concerned about atherosclerosis.
- ◆ There is a need for education about cancer prevention in this population. Only 29% were aware that processed meats are known carcinogens. 25% believed that cancer was the most common cause of death in the US, and about 40% believed the real cause of cancer was unknown.
- ◆ There is a need for interventions to improve eating habits in this population. 51% believed that eating a healthy diet was more expensive. 68% did not get 5 servings of fruit a day and 67% did not get 5 servings of vegetables a day.
- ◆ This population would benefit from health education about weight loss strategies. More than half wanted to lose weight but only 29% believed that eating habits were more important than exercise for weight loss.
- ◆ This group would be receptive to health information and health promotion programs. 85% were interested in making lifestyle changes, 84% agreed that changes to their eating habits would reduce their risk chronic diseases, 85% stated that they wanted to change their health behaviors and 100% agreed that awareness programs for healthy lifestyle habits would help prevent chronic diseases.

## References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "National diabetes fact sheet: national estimates and general information on diabetes and prediabetes in the United States, 2011." Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2011 (2011).