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Experience of Guatemalan Adults with Diabetes Who Have or/at Risk of Kidney Disease

*Debra J. Hain, PhD, APRN
Rhonda Goodman, PhD, APRN*

Over 60% of Guatemalan population is indigenous, most living in poverty. Diabetes is highly prevalent and many are unaware of the risk for chronic kidney disease (CKD). Disadvantaged populations like this have a higher risk of CKD due to lack of knowledge and access to care. There is a need to gain insight into the experience of living with diabetes and awareness of CKD risk so interventions can be implemented to prevent or slow the progression of CKD. Considering the high number of migrants from Guatemala (particularly in Florida) it is important to gain insight into global health problems and discover interventions that can be translated to those in the United States (US).

Qualitative, descriptive study face-to-face semi-structured interviews with investigators was conducted in communities near Antigua Guatemala. Community health workers who were part of a non-government nursing organization assisted with recruitment of adults with diabetes DM) (40 years or older). Informed consent was obtained via thumb print after obtaining IRB approval. Content analysis was used to analysis the data.

The research was conducted in three communities. Twenty indigenous Maya adults with DM (average 10 years of DM) participated in the study. None of the participants were aware if they had CKD and only one knew where the kidneys were located and the function of the kidneys; five reported that if they had CKD they would die, most had no insight into treatment of CKD and majority faced some challenges managing their diabetes (n= 19). The challenges included lack of access to care (medications and medical care) and decreased ability to eat the recommended foods due to environmental and financial factors.

The findings from this study demonstrate the important need for CKD education and recognition of risk factors so interventions can be implemented to prevent CKD or slow the progression. Early interventions could be implemented in primary care with nephrology nursing co-management. There is a need for more research to discover best practices in helping migrant vulnerable populations to engage in preventative strategies.

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