



Assessment of Risk Factors for Health Disparities among Latina Farm Workers

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Assessment of Risk Factors for Health Disparities among Latina Farm Workers

Abstract

Purpose/Background: Latina farm workers may experience a unique intersection of social and environmental factors that are known to affect health and well-being. The disadvantages inherent in their gender, race and social class may be compounded by their immigration status, rural location and the hazards of farm work. We propose to identify the most critical risk factors for poor health facing this underserved and understudied population.

Materials & Methods: Our study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative data from focus groups (n=3 groups of 10 participants each) and semi-structured interviews (n=15) with quantitative and qualitative survey data (n=100) and biological monitoring (n=45). The study includes six domains of inquiry: sociodemographics, food security and food access, housing conditions, social isolation, access to medical care and occupational hazards. Urinary biomonitoring is used to assess exposure to common agricultural pesticides.

Results: All study participants identify as Latina or Hispanic and, among those recruited to date (n=25), range in ages from 25 to 71 and report an average of 12 years working in agriculture. While sample and data collection is in progress, preliminary analysis indicate that these participants spend an average of 7.5 months per year employed in agricultural work. Participants report working with a range of crops common in Southern Idaho, including onions, sugarbeets, peas, corn, grapes, and hops. More than 25% of the study participants report that their employers do not provide water, cups and hand washing facilities on a daily basis. Participants report use of backpack and air blast sprayers, and approximately one-third report receiving training from their employers on the use of pesticides.

Discussion/Conclusion: This research will assess the prevalence of social and environmental risk factors among Latina farm workers using an interdisciplinary approach that combines surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups, biological monitoring and field observations.

Keywords

Latinas; Farm Workers; Social Determinants



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