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Abstract #62928

Mental health symptoms in a population based survey of minority farm operators

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Mental health symptom data from a recently completed occupational health survey of farm operators were examined. Telephone (87.5%) and face-to-face (12.5%) interviews consisting of both physical and mental health symptoms (General Health Questionnaire) were conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service with 7,167 farm operators in 50 states.

All mental health questions referred to the four weeks prior to the survey. Prevalences were adjusted for age, education, smoking, and years of farm and non-farm work. No differences were found among racial groups regarding cutting down on activities due to emotional problems. The following differences were present for at least one gender. American Indian and Alaskan Natives reported a higher prevalence compared to whites, of lost sleep over worry, trouble keeping busy, not leaving the house, and not playing a useful part in things. They were also more likely to have at least 4 of 20 symptoms, indicating psychiatric illness. Compared to whites, Asians reported a higher prevalence of trouble keeping busy and difficulty making decisions, but a lower prevalence of feeling under constant strain. African Americans reported a higher prevalence of difficulty concentrating, problems with alertness, trouble keeping busy, inability to enjoy normal activities, and not feeling happy, but a lower prevalence of feeling under constant strain compared to whites. Ethnic differences will also be presented.

These data will allow mental health professionals to understand racial and ethnic differences in prevalence of mental health symptoms among farm operators, and suggest opportunities for targeting interventions or services to these populations.

Learning Objectives: 1. Identify mental health symptoms experienced by farm operators. 2. Describe racial and ethnic differences in mental health symptoms. 3. Discuss implications of these findings for mental health intervention and services for farm operators.

Keywords: Mental Health, Minority Health

Related Web page:

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