



Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting

May 6 – 9, 2017 | San Francisco, CA

PAS Media Contacts:

Susan Stevens Martin, ssmartin@aap.org

Lisa Black, LBlack@aap.org

Laura Alessio, lalessio@aap.org

PAS Press Office (May 6-9): 832-371 6239

PAS Media Relations Office (Before May 6): 847-434-7877

Embargoed for Release: 12:01 a.m. PST, Thursday, May 4

Study Finds Exposure to Racism Harms Children’s Health

New research being presented at Pediatric Academic Societies 2017 Meeting suggests children across racial and ethnic groups who experience discrimination have more ADHD and worse general health.

SAN FRANCISCO – New research to be presented at the 2017 Pediatric Academic Societies 2017 Meeting illustrates the unhealthy effects racism can have on children, with reported exposure to discrimination tied to higher rates of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression, as well as decreased general health.

Authors of the study abstract, “The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination in the United States,” will present their findings on Sunday, May 7, in the Moscone Convention Center West in San Francisco. For the study, they looked at data from 95,677 participants in the 2011-12 National Survey on Children’s Health. In addition to providing physical and mental health data, caregivers of children in the survey were asked whether the child had experienced being “judged or treated unfairly” because of his or her race or ethnicity.

After adjusting for socioeconomic status, family structure, primary language and other factors, the researchers found a significant link between exposure to racism and health. The average proportion of children reported by parents to be in “excellent health” decreased by 5.4 percent among those exposed to perceived discrimination, for example. Exposure to racism also appeared to boost the odds of ADHD by 3.2 percent.

The biggest reduction in general health appeared among low-income, minority children, particularly Hispanic participants, said Ashaunta Anderson, MD, MPH, lead author of the study abstract and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of California, Riverside.

Some children exposed to discrimination who were from high-income households, however, also experienced negative health effects.

“White children with high income who experienced racial or ethnic discrimination had larger decreases in general health,” Dr. Anderson said, “while black children experiencing that combination of factors had increased rates of ADHD.”

The study also found that children who experienced racial discrimination had twice the odds of anxiety and depression compared to children who did not experience discrimination. In turn, children with anxiety or depression had roughly half the odd of excellent general health, and four times the odds of ADHD.

“Our findings suggest that racial discrimination contributes to race-based disparities in child health, independent of socioeconomic factors,” Dr. Anderson said, adding that coordinated efforts are needed to support children affected by discrimination with developmentally appropriate coping strategies and systems of care. In particular, she said, programs that provide positive parenting practices training and promote positive peer and role model relationships can help buffer children from the negative health effects of discrimination.

Dr Anderson will present the abstract, “The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination in the United States,” from 12:35 to 12:50 p.m. in conference rooms 2005-07.

Reporters interested in an interview with Dr. Anderson may contact media relations officer Iqbal Pittalwala at iqbal@ucr.edu or 951-827-6050.

Please note: only the abstract is being presented at the meeting. In some cases, the researcher may have more data available to share with media, or may be preparing a longer article for submission to a journal. Contact the researcher for more information.

###

The Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) Meeting brings together thousands of individuals united by a common mission: to improve child health and wellbeing worldwide. This international gathering includes pediatric researchers, leaders in academic pediatrics, experts in child health, and practitioners. The PAS Meeting is produced through a partnership of four organizations leading the advancement of pediatric research and child advocacy: Academic Pediatric Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Pediatric Society, and Society for Pediatric Research. For more information, visit the PAS Meeting online at www.pas-meeting.org, follow us on Twitter @PASMmeeting and #pasm17, or like us on Facebook.

ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination in the United States

Background: Racial discrimination is receiving increased attention as an underlying cause of health disparities in children. However, the current literature describing the largely damaging effect of racial discrimination on health is weakened by several endogenous factors, such as

race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES), that vary as racial discrimination and health status vary.

Objective: We aimed to: 1) describe the relation between perceived racial discrimination and child health and 2) evaluate the potential mediating role of mental health relating racial discrimination to other health outcomes, using methods that mitigate the problem of endogeneity.

Design/Methods: Using the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health (N=95,677), we performed: 1) propensity score analysis, comparing discrimination-exposed versus non-exposed children matched on race/ethnicity, age, sex, SES, family structure, and primary household language and 2) structural equation modeling, examining mental health as a mediator of the pathway between discrimination and other health outcomes. Missing data were imputed using random proportional imputation.

Results: In the first approach, the average proportion of children with excellent health decreased by 5.4% ($p < 0.001$) and that for ADHD increased by 3.2% ($p < 0.001$) with exposure to racial discrimination. Low-income, minority children appeared to experience the greatest health reductions with racial discrimination, especially among Hispanic children. Somewhat unexpectedly, coincident high income and discrimination exposure were associated with greater decrements in general health in White children and more ADHD in Black children. In the second approach, structural equation modeling was performed. As expected, minority children had much higher odds of experiencing racial discrimination (ORs > 3.75, $p < 0.001$); however, children who experienced racial discrimination were more likely to have anxiety and depression (ORs > 1.90, $p < 0.001$), and children with anxiety or depression had much lower odds of positive general health (ORs < 0.52, $p < 0.001$) and much higher odds of ADHD (ORs > 4.0, $p < 0.001$). See tables and figure for further details.

Conclusion(s): Our study provides a more accurate representation of the disparities that exist within general health and ADHD among children exposed to racism. This work may stimulate the formation of partnerships between healthcare and other sectors to address these disparities.