

Diabetes Mellitus an Epidemic in Haitian American Afro Caribbeans

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Defining Adherence

Devastatingly, 422 million individuals are affected by diabetes mellitus (DM) (WHO, 2021). In the United States, the age-adjusted prevalence of diabetes is 16.8% in Black, non-Hispanic Americans (CDC, 2020).

Haitian Americans are among vulnerable populations that experience challenges to treatment and management of DM. In the U.S. Haitian Americans are often subsumed in the Black demographic therefore there is limited data addressing the prevalence of DM in this population (Bivins et al, 2021).

Haitian Culture

In the Haitian community inherent cultural factors including religion, health beliefs, and language may influence their health behaviors (Bivins, 2018). In general, Haitians rely on God for their strength, the dominant religion is Catholicism, Protestantism constitute (20%), and Voodoo, a religion originating from the African is believed to be practiced by the different classes of Haitians (Magny-Normilus, Mawn & Dalton, 2020; Colin and Paperwalla, 2013).

In addition, Haitians have a tendency to use herbal preparations to prevent and treat diseases (Ruffin, 2021). Haitians speak French (15%) and French-based Haitian Creole (100%) as their language.

In the United States, Haitians continue to speak their native tongue in the Haitian community. At times, this may lead to a language barrier that other English-speaking Afro Caribbeans do not experience in the United States (Giger, 2021).

The Haitian diet is considered a source of pride and is rich with carbohydrates (rice, corn meal, and pasta) and eating at home to maintain the Haitian culture is paramount. The Haitian diet, genetics and the increased sedentary lifestyle in the United States increases the risk of diabetes and hypertension in this population (Colin & Paperwalla, 2013;Tovar, 2014).

As such cultural norms and behaviors ingrained in the Haitian community may pose a barrier and increase adverse outcome in Haitians living with diabetes (Bivins, 2020).

Purpose

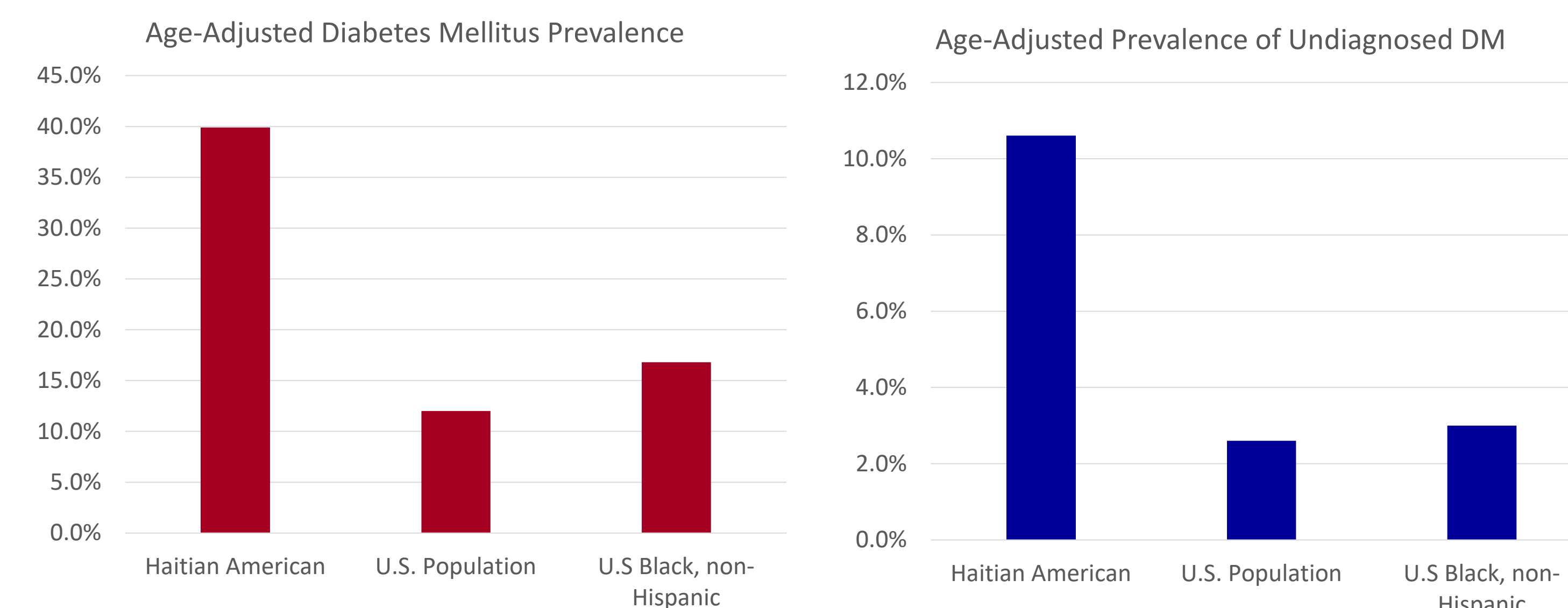
To measure the prevalence of diabetes mellitus among Haitian Americans Afro-Caribbeans living in the United States.

Ethical Considerations, Methodology and Analysis

This descriptive quantitative cross-sectional pilot study was approved by the Holy Cross Hospital, Fort Lauderdale, Institutional Review Board. The researchers received permission from administrators to host health fairs and community events and recruited a convenience sample of 151 Haitian American (health fairs, church gatherings, and other community events in New York, New Jersey, and South Florida).

Each participant gave verbal informed consent to participate in the study and individuals newly identified or unmanaged conditions were provided with medical follow-up if they did not have a current medical provider. Each individual was given the opportunity to self-identify as Haitian American to confirm whether he or she met the criteria for the study. Participants were informed of: (a) the purpose of the study; (b) the time commitment (5-10 minutes in total); (c) the role of each participant; (d) the voluntary nature of their participation in the study and their right to withdraw at any time; (e) and the manner in which the study findings will be disseminated.

Verbal informed consent was obtained from each participant before collecting data. Researchers then collected baseline information, including HbA1C level, age, weight, height, basal metabolic index (BMI), and blood pressure measurements. To maintain reliability among all data collectors, the researchers used the same tools to gather the data. The PTS 3021 Diagnostic A1C Now Test Kit was used to measure the blood glucose for each participant, the WW Conair Compact Scale, was used to weigh each participant, and a calibrated digital sphygmomanometer was used to measure the blood pressures for each participant with dual readings taken when possible.



Results

Age adjusted prevalence of DM among the Haitian Americans living in the US was 39.9% (95% CI 29.8% - 50.1%).

This is more than twice the prevalence of in the Black, non-Hispanic population (16.8%) and the general US population (12%).

Conclusion

The findings of this pilot study showed a prevalence rate of DM that may be as high as Native Americans of the Pima tribe, the highest rate of any group in the world.

Haitian Americans are an economically challenged group of Black individuals who face many obstacles to care including a language barrier and stigma as immigrants.

In the US, Haitian Americans are a rapidly growing group that is nearly 50 times larger than the population of Pima Indians. Therefore, if this epidemic in the Haitian Americans is not addressed it will create a public health disaster for this marginalized community.

Interprofessional Implications

This study included a diverse group of researchers with unique perspectives in the disciplines of nursing, medicine, and mathematics.

Likewise, in keeping with social justice it is imperative to encourage health providers, community organizations, and policy makers to provide financial support to promote aggressive diabetes screening and education to Haitians in order to increase health equity and to decrease health disparities in Haitian American Communities.

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 References provided upon request