Dairy Worker Stress: Mental & Physical Health Implications

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Migrant Labor Workforce in the United States

• Hazardous Occupation
  • Working conditions are often dangerous

• Immigrant Status
  • Few legal rights
  • Limited language
  • Poverty
  • Lack of familiarity with laws and regulations
  • Fear of losing job or being deported
Latino Migrant Dairy Workers

- Latino workforce
  - 59% from Mexico, 22% from other Latin American Countries (Harrison & Lloyd, 2012)
- Latino migrant dairy workers encounter numerous stressors due to:
  - Inadequate housing
  - Nutrition
  - Medical care
  - Discriminatory treatment
  - Language barriers
  - Separation from friends and family
  - Physical and social isolation
  - Adaptation to a new country
  - May not have prior experience working with large animals

Alderete, Vega, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 1999; Hovey & Magaña, 2000; Poss & Pierce, 2003; Rothenberg, 1998.)
Worker Stress

• NIOSH Definition of Workplace Stress
  • “Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury.”
Purpose of Study

- Feasibility of accessing Latino Dairy Workers in PHS Region VIII
- What do Latino Dairy Workers report as stressors?
- How do they report stress?
- What are their coping mechanisms?
Long Term Purpose

- Prevalence of mental health/substance abuse
- Association between mental health/substance abuse and work-related injuries
- Development and Implementation of an Intervention
Sample Population

- 15 Latino Dairy Workers
- Convenience Sample
- Two Dairy Sites in Northern Colorado
  - Herd range approximately from 1500-4500
  - One family owned dairy; one corporate farm
Data Collection Methods

• Key informant interviews
  • Semi structured
  • Conducted in Spanish and at worksite; 20-30 minutes
  • Participants were recruited by:
    • Word of mouth
    • Meet with supervisors and owners
    • Flyers
Interview Structure

• Demographic Questions
• Open ended questions
  • Length of time at dairy; number of hours worked
  • Roles and responsibilities at dairy and at home
  • Perceptions regarding substance abuse and medical assistance
  • Stresses associated/experienced with migrant work
  • Stress management
  • Perceptions on immigrant status and laws
Data Analysis

• Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed in Spanish, then translated into English
• Coding was done by 2 study staff separately
• Constant comparison technique
• Inductive & systematic exploration of data
### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>N=14 (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>86% male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (m=33 years old)</td>
<td>Range (22-50 years old)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>64% Married</td>
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<td>Living Arrangements</td>
<td>79% with someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td>79% Mexico</td>
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<td>Primary Language</td>
<td>93% Spanish</td>
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<td>Years lived in the US (m= 7.43 years)</td>
<td>Range (2-25 years)</td>
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<td>Level of Education (m=8.8 years)</td>
<td>Range (3-17 years)</td>
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<td>Income (annual salary)</td>
<td>43% between $10,000-19,000 (range $10,000-50,000)</td>
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<td>Medical Insurance</td>
<td>50% yes</td>
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Results

• Primary Theme
  • Resiliency to mental and physical stressors
    * workers’ perceived social support from family members
    * Appreciation of stable employment

• Recurring Topics
  • Fear of police
  • Separation from family
  • Work routine
  • Faith/church
  • Coping mechanisms (e.g. soccer)
Quote

• “One gets sad for a while and after a while it passes because we have to accept that we’re here. We have to work.”

• “Thank God I’ve been here three years and I’ve never been kicked. There are times, there are people that happens to but not me. Not now thank God. Almost three years here inside the milking parlor, three years. Nothing has happened to me. Everything good, yes.”

• “Sometimes tired, stressed because there’s never a lack of normal little problems that come with the job. And there are days that are better but the mere fact of feeling the responsibility that such a big part of milking depends on me. It’s a bit stressful but at the same time I’m glad to have a stable job, stable, that stays all year.”
“What makes me feel happy is being able to have more for my family, more help economically in Mexico. At the same time for myself too..”

“That I help myself and I help them. You see that over there the economy is really low and what I make here in currency from over there it’s like what a lawyer makers. Make believe that I have the salary of a lawyer

“To get rid of stress. Before a long time ago, like five years ago ummm I drank alcohol, beers on the weekend but not anymore. I say that instead of doing that, when I got married I started thinking differently. So then now I try to live time more with my son and my wife. I spend time with them, we go out to eat or something like that.”
Limitations

• Small sample size (n=14)
• Convenient sample
• 2 dairies in Western State represented
Next Steps

• Pilot study more dairies and objective measures for anxiety, depression, substance abuse.

• Use results to determine intervention?
Thank you!