Objective: The purpose of our study was to examine the effects of socioeconomic status, acculturative stress, discrimination, and marginalization as predictors of depression in pregnant Hispanic women.

Design: A prospective observational design was used.

Setting: Central and Gulf coast areas of Texas in obstetrical offices.

Participants: A convenience sample of 515 pregnant, low income, low medical risk, and self-identified Hispanic women who were between 22–24 weeks gestation was used to collect data.

Measures: The predictor variables were socioeconomic status, discrimination, acculturative stress, and marginalization. The outcome variable was depression.

Results: Education, frequency of discrimination, age, and Anglo marginality were significant predictors of depressive symptoms in a linear regression model, $F(6, 458) = 8.36, P < .0001$. Greater frequency of discrimination was the strongest positive predictor of increased depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: It is important that health care providers further understand the impact that age and experiences of discrimination throughout the life course have on depressive symptoms during pregnancy. (Ethn Dis. 2012;22[4]:497–503)

Key Words: Depression, Discrimination, Acculturation, Hispanic Women, Pregnancy

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a major health concern in Hispanic women during pregnancy and can negatively influence health outcomes of the mother and infant. It has been reported that approximately 20% of all women experience symptoms of depression during pregnancy; and Hispanic women are more likely to experience depression than Hispanic men, or non-Hispanic White or African American women.1,2 These depression-related symptoms may often be disregarded as other hormonal imbalances, often leaving Hispanic women with undiagnosed depression.3 Depression in these women can lead to poor nutrition, substance use or suicidal ideations. Depression can also lead to premature births, low birth weights and developmental delays in the infants.4 It is imperative that we better understand predictors of depression in pregnant Hispanic women so that we can intervene to improve perinatal health outcomes. Hence, the purpose of our study was to examine which demographic and psychosocial factors are the strongest predictors of depression in pregnant Hispanic women.

BACKGROUND

Depression

Several researchers have found depression to be a common issue among pregnant minority women. Researchers have identified that depression is a mental health disparity that exists among pregnant Hispanic women, and they frequently experience symptoms of depression ranging from moderate to severe symptoms.5,6 In order to contribute to the literature on depression in pregnant Hispanic women, we focused on several possible contributors to depression in this population: acculturation, perceived racial discrimination, acculturation and marginalization, and education.

Acculturation

Acculturation can be defined as the progression in which the attitudes and/or behaviors of people from one culture are altered due to contact with a different culture.7 Acculturation can strongly influence the mental health outcomes of ethnic minorities. Researchers have reported that acculturation has been significantly related to perceived stress, suicidal ideation and higher depression levels in pregnant Hispanic women.8,9 For the purpose of this study, we will build on existing knowledge about the relationship between acculturation and depression in pregnant Hispanic women.

Perceived Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is often experienced by Hispanics and can lead to poor mental health. Barksdale and colleagues defined racial discrimination as “overt acts such as verbal slurs, innuendos, or physical action, or less obvious covert acts such as being