Abstract

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Myocardial infarction in Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic whites. The San Antonio Heart Study.

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BACKGROUND: Mexican-American men experience reduced cardiovascular mortality compared with non-Hispanic white men. There is no corresponding ethnic difference in cardiovascular mortality in women. The difference in men could result either from a lower incidence of cardiovascular disease or a lower case fatality rate among Mexican-Americans.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODS: Although the incidence of cardiovascular disease in Mexican-Americans is unknown, we have collected data on prevalence of myocardial infarction in 5,148 individuals examined in the San Antonio Heart Study, a population-based survey of cardiovascular disease conducted between 1979 and 1988 in Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic whites aged 25-64 years. Myocardial infarction was assessed by Minnesota-coded electrocardiograms and by a self-reported history of a physician-diagnosed heart attack. For both end points, the age-adjusted prevalence of myocardial infarction was lower in Mexican-American men than in non-Hispanic white men.

RESULTS: After adjustment for age and diabetes status (present/absent), the odds of a myocardial infarction, as defined by either criterion, was approximately one third lower in Mexican-American men than in non-Hispanic white men ($p = 0.06$). In women, the prevalence of both myocardial infarction end points was slightly higher in Mexican-Americans than in non-Hispanic whites, although neither of these differences was significant. Although the ethnic differences in prevalence in this study were not statistically significant, their pattern parallels the pattern in the mortality due to cardiovascular diseases.

CONCLUSIONS: Therefore, the results support the hypothesis that the reduced cardiovascular mortality rate observed in Mexican-American men reflects a lower incidence of myocardial infarction rather than a reduced case fatality rate because the latter would result in a higher prevalence.

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