Ethnopsychopharmacology
African American Adults

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Curley L. Bonds, MD
Medical Director
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
Health Sciences Clinical Professor
Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
Professor & Chair
Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science

Panel Participants
Sarah Gelberd, MD LAC-DMH
O.C. White, III, MD LAC-DMH
Pharmacogenetics

- The study of the genetic variations affecting individual response to drugs to inform development of safer prescribing criteria and more effective drugs.
Ethnopsychopharmacology

- The study of the way racial and ethnic groups respond to psychiatric medications
Numerous mechanisms affect drug responses:
- Conjugation (P450 enzymes)
- Volume of Distribution
- Protein Binding
- Other Pharmacokinetic Factors (Theoretical)
  - Absorption
  - Excretion
  - Crossing Blood Brain Barrier
Figure 1
Factors determining pharmacological response

- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Environmental factors
  - Genetics
  - Pharmacokinetics
    - Dosage adverse effects
  - Pharmacodynamics
    - Clinical response
Figure 2

Factors affecting drug response

- Culture
- Placebo effects
- Adherence (compliance)
- Sex
- Herbal supplements
- Age
- Social support
- Diet
- Personality
- Smoking
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Disease
- Caffeine
- Exercise

Genetics

Keh-Min Lin (Psych Times)
FDA recognizes that racial and ethnic groups may respond differently to medications.

Requires that study participants be permitted to self-report ethnicity

Many studies indicate there are difference in treatment outcomes between different racial/ethnic groups.
Cultural Considerations

- Black patients significantly more likely to have poor medication adherence
Tricyclic antidepressants

- Some studies have suggested that African American patients may respond better and more rapidly to TCAs than to other antidepressants
  - Silver, Poland, Lin 1993

- Greater side effects to TCAs in African Americans may be the result of slower metabolism (eg Desipramine)
  - Lin and colleagues (unpublished)
Cultural Considerations - SSRIs

- African American patients may respond less robustly to Fluoxetine when compared with whites
  - Silver, Poland, Lin 1993

- SSRIs often inhibit P450 isoenzymes resulting in drug-drug interactions
Consequences of Metabolic Syndrome

- Abdominal obesity
- Abnormal glucose metabolism
- Elevated lipids
- Cholesterol metabolism impaired
- Elevated BP
- Increased risk of CV Disease and DM II
Cultural Considerations - Clozapine

- Benign (ethnic) leukopenia not uncommon in younger African American males
- May have implications for clinical monitoring systems
- Defined as $1.5 \times 10^9/L$
Cultural Considerations

- 33% of African American patients may be slow metabolizers of antipsychotic medication
  - Lin 2010

- African American patients are more likely to receive injections of antipsychotics

- Overmedication is more common
  - Segel et al 1996
Intra Ethnic Specifics

- African Americans and sub-Saharan Africans – more likely to be slow metabolizers (CYP2D6*17)
- Ethiopians – more likely to be ultra-rapid metabolizers (29%)
Dietary Considerations

- Sudanese people and South Indians metabolize antipyrine and clomipramine slower than others while they reside in their native countries, but after they adapt a Western diet, their metabolism speeds up.

- This phenomenon is also thought to affect alprazolam, adinazolam and clomipramine across populations.
Red Blood Cell (RBC)/Serum Li Ratio

- Distribution of Lithium across cellular membranes is controlled by several membrane transport and counter transport mechanisms.
- Sodium-Li countertransport system plays a pivotal role.
- This system is significantly less active in African Americans than in Caucasians.
Red Blood Cell (RBC)/Serum Li Ratio

- The difference between African Americans and other ethnic groups may result in a higher rate of CNS-related side effects
- Lower Lithium levels may prevent central toxicity
Cultural Considerations - Benzodiazepines

- Adinazolam – triazolobenzodiazepine, investigational agent
- Clearance increased in African American patients resulting in higher concentrations of N-desmethyladinazolam, a metabolite of Adinazolam, and greater drug effects on psychomotor performance
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Other IMPORTANT Considerations

- Culture and symbolic aspects of psychopharmacology are relatively unstudied
  - Patient biases
  - Patient beliefs
  - ‘Placebo Effect’

Baker and Bell Psych Svs March 1999
Personalized Medicine

- **Pharmacogenomic tests** can provide clinicians a means to practice personalized psychopharmacology
- **Ancestry DNA tests** can identify what percentage of an individual’s DNA is from different parts of the world
- Both may have treatment implications for patients