SES DISPARITIES IN FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENT WITHIN OLDER ASIAN AMERICANS: COMPARISON OF FOUR RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS

Katherine Wang, Zheng Zhu, and Xiang Qi

This study investigated to what extent socioeconomic status (SES) disparities associates with functional impairment within older Asians in comparison with other racial/ethnic groups. Data were from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011-2018 that included 3,297 White, 1,755 Black, 1,708 Hispanic, and 730 Asians aged ≥60. Physical functioning was measured by activities of daily living (ADL) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), memory was determined by CERAD-WL, and language fluency was measured by Animal Fluency Tests. We conducted multivariate logistic regressions to examine the association between SES and functioning impairment within racial/ethnic groups and performed seemingly unrelated regressions to compare the regression coefficients across subgroups. For the age- and sex-adjusted prevalence of functional impairment, Asians with ≤high school education had the highest prevalence of memory impairment among all races/ethnicities, and no difference was observed for all racial/ethnic groups with >high school education. After adjustment for key covariates, Blacks and Hispanics had higher odds of ADL/IADL disabilities and cognitive impairment relative to Whites. The odds of ADL/IADL disabilities did not differ with Asians and Whites, whereas Asians were more likely to have language fluency impairment than Whites. Education disparity for ADL disability (OR, 3.42; 95% CI, 2.21-5.29) and memory impairment (OR, 16.87; 95% CI, 8.57-33.21) were largest among Asians compared to Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Income disparity for function impairment did not significantly differ across four racial/ethnic groups (all P > 0.05). This study indicates that Asians fare worst in the burden of functional impairment due to education disparity.