The Societal Impacts of COVID-19 on Asian Americans: Mitigating Mental Health Disparities Stemming from Labels Like the “China Virus”

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Problem

• Since the beginning of the outbreak, there has been a **150% surge in anti-Asian hate crimes** (Smolinski 2021).

• Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit group that provides free text message mental-health support, saw a **39% increase in texts from Asian Americans** in the first quarter of 2020 (Person et al. 2004).
Theory of Interactionism

- Herbert Blumer coined the theory of symbolic interactionism suggesting that race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity (Blumer and Duster 1980).
- The COVID-19 pandemic has signified the othering of sub-sections of the population, where many saw “China virus” or “Wuhan flu” commonly used by politicians or popular media to discuss the pandemic.
Nature of Disparities

Social Conditions
- Communication Issues
- Digital Divide
- Lack of Support
- Isolation
- Racism
- Discrimination

Cultural Differences
- Gender
- Transportation
- Geographic Region
- Schooling
- Primary Language

Material Conditions
- Employment
- Socioeconomic Status
- Education Level
- Housing
- Community Support

Personal Factors
- Trauma
- Loss
- Treatment of Population
- Risk Behaviors
- Physical Health
- Genetic Vulnerability

Relationship Factors
- Separation from Family
- Family Relationships
- Connection to Others

Nature of Disparities

Cultural Differences

Material Conditions

Personal Factors

Relationship Factors

Social Conditions
Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Implement Stigma Reduction Education and Training Programs

Recommendation 2: Use Research as a Foundation to Enact Policy and Governmental Changes to Address How Asian Stigmas Affect Mental Health
CONVERGE Working Group Projects

Bennett, D., Knight, T., Dubois, E., Khurana, P., Wild, D., Laforce, S., Yuan, X.-J. (2020). NSF CONVERGE Working Group, COVID-19 Global Research Registry for Public Health and Social Sciences Technological Innovations in Response to COVID-19. This COVID-19 Working Group effort was supported by the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) Network and the CONVERGE facility at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder (NSF Award #1841338). https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/covid-19/working-groups/issues-impacts-recovery/technological-innovations-in-response-to-covid-19

Select Projects:

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Thank You!

Questions?

Please reach out to evdubois@albany.edu with further questions.
References


