Reviewer's report

Title: Oral Health-related Cultural Beliefs for four racial/Ethnic Groups: Assessment of the Literature

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Reviewer: H. Asuman Kiyak

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Review of revised BioMed Central manuscript: "Oral health-related cultural beliefs for four racial/ethnic groups: Assessment of the Literature"

In general, the authors have responded to this reviewer's concerns and recommendations, although, as noted below, their response to at least one of these concerns is not quite accurate. While they have justified their decision to ignore Native American populations, it is inaccurate to state (as they have done in their response #5) that "Most reviews of their health status and health beliefs...aggregate this information and do not link it to a specific group." In fact, if they focused just on the Navajo population, they would have found several studies that examine oral health status, beliefs and practices of young and old in the Navajo population. In my previous review I noted that the ICS II study provided extensive data on this specific Native American population, with several publications that emerged from it. In addition, Brian Burt and colleagues at U Michigan conducted research (mostly epidemiological but some beliefs and practices data were obtained) in the 1980s with Navajo populations.

The comments below address the revised version of this manuscript:

1) There is a general sense that this is an anthropological view of four different groups, with no effort to integrate their findings or to illustrate commonalities and differences across the four groups. The only exception to this is their discussion of similarities re: beliefs about tooth loss and preventive strategies across groups on p. 12-13. It would be much more valuable to the reader to see some discussion of how these groups differ or are similar, and if the differences are due to being "immigrants in a foreign country" vs. cultural beliefs that occur in both the home country and when they immigrate. Given that most clinicians and dental researchers are not working exclusively with just one or another of these ethnic/racial groups, why not provide some discussion of similarities and differences?

2) On a related level, the authors do not separate or even mention if the studies they refer to were conducted in the group's home country or in the country to which they immigrated. This is particularly important when discussing the TCM beliefs of Chinese; most of the traditional beliefs they discuss were found among Chinese in China. It would be useful to see which traditional beliefs and TCM practices are also carried out by Chinese who immigrate to western countries.
3) The fact that they found only one study of Filipinos in their home country and one of Filipinos in Saipan limits the generalizability of their discussion. This is perhaps the weakest part of their review; only 2 studies of Filipinos in very different settings compared with 16 of African Americans and 30 of Chinese populations makes the review very unbalanced.

4) On pages 20-22 where they discuss cultural beliefs and practices of Hispanics/Latinos, they do not specify which nationalities or locales these groups represent, despite discussing earlier the importance of considering the variations among this larger population. The problem is compounded by mixing in their discussion of Hispanics/Latinos in general with studies of Puerto Ricans. If they cannot identify more specific characteristics of the former, then they should have a separate paragraph on studies of Puerto Ricans and indicate if this group appears to have similar vs. different practices and beliefs from the larger group of Hispanics/Latinos.

5) Why do the authors highlight the large and growing numbers of these four ethnic groups in California if their review did not focus on these populations only in California?! In fact, they did not even limit their review to ethnic/nationality groups in the U.S., so why keep referring to the importance of this type of discussion re: cultural beliefs to the population in California? It sounds like a justification for a grant application that will address oral health beliefs of California’s minority population, but clearly that is not the objective of this review.

6) On p. 7 they indicate that they searched for all relevant literature for just over two decades, 1980-2006 but this is actually a 27-year period! Why not just say for the 27 years between 1980 and 2006?

7) On p. 6, near the middle of the page, they state, In 1999, the highest median income for a family with a median size Is this referring to all ethnic minorities in the U.S. or in California, or just to Chinese immigrant families?

8) In several places throughout their RESULTS section, they refer to studies of dental health or the link between dental health and systemic health or to dental disease as being defined as caries and gum disease. It would be better to use the broader term of oral health or oral diseases since most of the studies they reviewed obtained information on the broader range of beliefs, i.e. about teeth and the mouth in general.

9) Note that several grammatical and punctuation errors remain, including the citation in the text of Wong’s research (now on p. 18) with 2005 added to it, unlike the other citations that are just the citation number (e.g. should be Wong and colleagues [59]).