

## CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THE GERIATRIC DEPRESSION SCALE TO OLDER LATINAS

Pamela Hodges, MSN, RN  
Mary Z. “Kelly” Dunn, PhD, APRN, BC  
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio  
7703 Floyd Curl Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78229-3900  
Depression, Elders, Latinas

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to determine the reliability and validity of the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) as a screening instrument for the older Latina population. Older Latinas frequently have limited access to health care and a higher prevalence of chronic illness and disability. These may contribute to depression; therefore methods are needed for identifying depression in this population. As the aging population doubles by 2025, and as the Hispanic population increases, it is necessary to identify culturally relevant instruments for future studies and development of interventions to provide for successful aging.

**Methods:** Sixty Latina participants age 65-97 years were recruited from community agencies through either individual or group presentations or referrals. Safety health screening and appropriate medical approval were obtained prior to data collection. The Geriatric Depression Scale was completed as part of a larger descriptive-correlational study on the physical function of older Latinas using mixed methods of data collection including interviews and measurements of physical, social, cultural and psychological variables in addition to the GDS.

**Findings:** Using the 15-item Geriatric Depression Scale, 31.4% of the sample was identified as depressed. One-half of the participants self-identified as more Mexican, primarily Spanish speaking, and first generation in the United States indicating a lower level of acculturation. There was a significant negative correlation between the GDS and Acculturation ( $r = -.428, p = .008$ ). Latinas who were less acculturated reported higher levels of depression.

**Discussion:** The GDS is commonly used for identifying minor and major depressive symptoms with sensitivities ranging from 70% to 89%. Contrary to most studies evaluating the GDS for accuracy in detecting late-life depression, this instrument performed poorly for many of the Latinas in this study. We postulate that the GDS may evaluate depression based on the values of non-Hispanic white middle class. When evaluating Latinas using the GDS, results may refer to situational depressive symptoms rather than major depression.