



Lumbee Rite of Passage: A Suicide Prevention Model for American Indian Youth

Project Summary

Why is this study being done?

Suicide is a threat to the health of all Americans, but some ethnic groups are more affected than others. American Indian youth experience high rates of suicide completions, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation. Many factors contribute to suicidal ideation in American Indian youth, including depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, substance abuse, hopelessness, forced acculturation, and lack of social support. Cultural interventions that utilize cultural practices to intervene on health outcomes, as distinguished from interventions that are merely culturally appropriate have recently been associated with positive health outcomes in American Indians as well as other ethnic groups. Still, while it is highly recommended that interventions targeting mental illness in American Indian youth consider cultural constructs related to health, very few studies have used this approach to-date.

What is the goal of this study?

The overall goal of the study is to determine the impact of cultural programs, specifically a culture class conducted by the Lumbee tribe at three tribally owned Boys and Girls Clubs, on suicide ideation in American Indian adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Who and what is involved in this study?

The study, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health involves participation from the Lumbee community and will be conducted as a partnership between the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity (MACHE) at Wake Forest University School of Medicine (WFUSM), the University of NC at Pembroke (UNCP), and the Lumbee Tribe of NC. In this study, we will: (1) assess perceptions regarding suicidal behavior and risk factors for suicide and examine mental health needs among and services for Lumbee Indian youth ages in Robeson County, NC; and (2) determine the impact of a tribally-run cultural program on suicidal ideation and its risk factors. The study will be conducted in two phases. In **Phase 1 (Fall 2010/Winter 2011)**, we conducted in-depth interviews with community gatekeepers regarding availability and quality of mental health resources and focus groups with Lumbee youth to identify impressions of mental health issues, particularly regarding suicide and its risk factors in their community. In **Phase 2**, we will conduct a small study in conjunction with the Lumbee tribe to measure changes in suicidal ideation and its risk factors that occur as a result of participation in a cultural program that includes native dancing, pow-wow singing, NC Indian history, beading, and pottery.

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