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Georgia Southern University

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Benefits of identifying sickle cell disease (SCD) carriers include detection of at-risk couples who may be informed on reproductive choices. Studies consistently report insufficient knowledge about the genetic inheritance pattern of SCD among people with sickle cell trait (SCT). This study explored perspectives of adults with SCT on the information needed to make an informed reproductive decision and the recommendations for communicating SCT information. Five focus groups (N=25) were conducted with African Americans with SCT ages 18–65 years old. Participants were asked about their knowledge of SCT, methods for finding information on SCT, impact of SCT on daily living, and interactions with healthcare providers. An inductive-deductive qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data for emerging themes. Four themes emerged, highlighting the unmet information needs of African American sickle cell carriers: (1) SCT and SCD Education; (2) Information Sources; (3) Improved Communication about SCT and SCD; and (4) Increased Screening Strategies. Future studies are needed to determine effective strategies for communicating SCT information and to identify opportunities for education within community and medical settings. Identifying strategies to facilitate access to SCT resources and education could serve as a model for meeting unmet information needs for carriers of other genetic conditions.

“Sickle Cell Carriers’ Unmet Information Needs: Beyond Knowing Trait Status” was recently published in *J Genet Couns*. Dr. Tilicia L. Mayo-Gamble, Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, is lead author.
Georgia Southern: Researchers Look at Factors Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Doctoral students and faculty in the Department of Biostatistics at the Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health examined factors associated with childhood autism spectrum disorders (ASD) based on the National Survey of Children’s Health. The National Survey of Children’s Health is a cross-sectional survey of parents’ report of their child health conditions. We performed a secondary analysis of this survey data to determine the association between parent-reported autism spectrum disorder diagnosis and possible risk factors. The logistic regression model for complex survey data was applied. Results found that child health, health insurance, and family health and activities were significantly associated with ASD diagnosis.

Specifically, the odds of reporting autism spectrum disorder for children with history of anxiety disorder is seven times higher than that of those without; the odds of autism spectrum disorder diagnosis is 45 percent and 36 percent less in children uninsured and those privately-insured compared to those publicly insured. Additionally, children whose primary language was Spanish have reduced odds of 50 percent. Our study highlights associated factors of childhood ASD and as such it can be used as a stepping stone for future studies, especially cohort studies to validate the direction of important associations.

“Identifying factors associated with autism spectrum disorder based on a comprehensive national survey” was published in International Journal of Child and Adolescent Health.