

Improving Psychological and Physical Health in Women of Color Via Salsa Dancing

MAMA SK¹, MEDINA AV¹, EDWARDS RO², MCNEILL L³, LEE RE¹.

¹Texas Obesity Research Center, University of Houston, ²Strictly Street Salsa,

³University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center; Houston, Texas

ABSTRACT

Background: Physical activity improves psychological and physical health. Latin dancing is popular and can be used to meet moderate to vigorous physical activity intensity recommendations. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to determine whether participation in a Latin dance intervention reduced perceived stress and improved health. **Method:** SAVING LIVES, STAYING ACTIVE (SALSA) was an 8-week randomized controlled cross-over design, pilot study to promote regular physical activity from Latin dance and fruit and vegetable consumption as a means to preventing obesity among women of color in Houston, Texas. Participants were randomized to a four week bi-weekly salsa dance or web-based dietary intervention group. After four weeks of intervention, women switched groups to ensure that everyone received both treatments, to accommodate community requests. Participants completed Godin's Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire, the Weekly Stress Inventory and anthropometric measures at baseline (T1), cross-over (T2) and post-interventions (T3). **Results:** Women ($N=50$) were middle-aged ($M=41.9$ years, $SD=9.6$) and overweight (M BMI= 29.7 kg/m², $SD=5.3$). Participants reported increased weekly leisure-time activity (M at T1= 11.6 , M at T2= 18.5 , M at T3= 23.5 minutes per day) over time ($F(1,39)=28.446$, $p<.001$). Women in both groups experienced significant increases in stressful events from T1 to T2 ($M=26.8$ vs. 28.1 , $F(1,39)=4.213$, $p=.047$). However, there was a significant difference in perceived impact of stressful events over time by group ($F(1,39)=4.808$, $p=.034$). Women who participated in the Latin dance intervention first perceived a lower impact of stressful events at T2 ($M=73.9$ vs. 60.33), and women who participated in the web-based intervention first perceived a higher impact ($M=59.9$ vs. 79.5). **Conclusions:** Women who participated in the bi-weekly Latin dance intervention first reported more stressful events after the intervention but perceived these events to be less stressful than before participating in the Latin dance intervention. Latin dance may increase physical activity and reduce the impact of stress in women of color, improving health and quality of life, and may be perceived as more culturally relevant and fun than traditional physical activity interventions. Future studies

are needed to determine whether Latin dance improves other psychological measures and quality of life in women of color.

KEYWORDS: Physical activity, Stress, Minority health, Women