

Julio Iglesias Urges Hispanics to Seek Treatment for Depression

Closing the Gap, Hispanic Agenda for Action • October 1998

Latin singing star Julio Iglesias is speaking up about major depression—a common, life-threatening, but treatable mental illness that affects an average of 3 to 5 percent of all Hispanic Americans over a lifetime. Iglesias is featured in a new radio public service announcement (PSA), recorded in English and Spanish, on depression.

The PSAs were developed by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and are currently airing in major media markets throughout the country, including 105 stations affiliated with the Hispanic Radio Network (HRN).

Iglesias points out in the PSAs that sometimes people with other major illnesses like heart disease, cancer, and stroke are more vulnerable to becoming seriously depressed. Treating co-occurring depression actually helps people recover from their other diseases and survive longer. “You can help a loved one get treatment for depression and start enjoying life again,” Iglesias says.

The PSAs are part of NIMH’s education campaign which includes a three-minute HRN health show segment describing the symptoms of depression and successful treatments.

As a result of the campaign, nearly 1,000 Spanish-speakers have called NIMH’s toll-free phone numbers each month to order brochures on depression and anxiety disorders.

These efforts to ensure widespread print, broadcast, and electronic dissemination of information on mental disorders are just one aspect of NIMH education programs that assign high priority to reaching diverse Hispanic communities and other minorities, as well as the general public.

In addition to this radio PSA campaign, the Depression and Anxiety Disorders Education Programs have developed collaborations with private sector organizations and other government agencies, vastly increasing outreach to Hispanic communities nationwide.

This outreach has included the development of work site education programs and the creation of a network of organizational partners to help plan and carry out communications at the local level. Order forms offering Spanish-language brochures on depression and anxiety were placed in grocery stores in many Hispanic neighborhoods.

Collaboration within the National Institutes of Health resulted in recent articles on depression and panic disorder that were highlighted in *Pro Salud*, a free insert for established Spanish-language newspapers and magazines. The publication appears in the seven major markets where more than 60 percent of Spanish-speaking people in the U.S. reside.

NIMH invites people to call 1-800-421-4211 to request depression materials, or call 1-88-88-ANXIETY for information in Spanish or English on anxiety disorders, including panic and obsessive compulsive disorders.

Spanish speakers may also choose to view Spanish information materials and order them from the National Institute of Mental Health Web site. Click on Public Information on the first page of <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>.

The Office of Minority Health Resource Center also has a catalog of NIH materials in Spanish, including information from NIMH on panic disorder and depression. Call 1-800-444-6472. ❖

