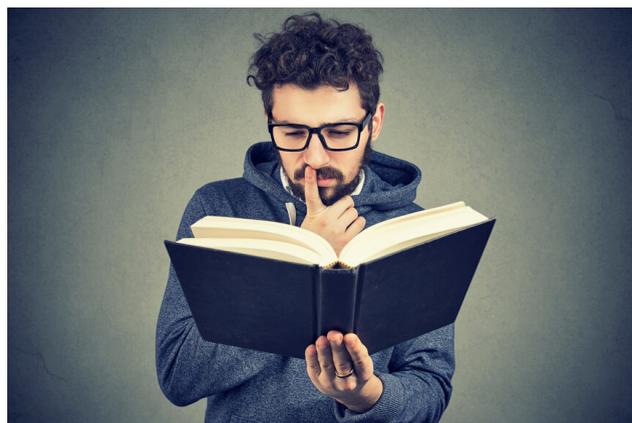




IMPROVING DEPRESSION LITERACY AND REDUCING STIGMA IN THE HISPANIC AND LATINO COMMUNITY



Significant mental health disparities exist for Hispanic and Latino populations, especially with regard to depression treatment. Stigma and poor communication that may be due to language barriers and low mental health literacy between patients and their providers result in low use of antidepressant medications and early treatment withdrawal.

Cultural factors which influence treatment decisions among Hispanic and Latinos include:

- fears about the addictive and harmful properties of antidepressants;
- worries about taking too many pills;
- stigma attached to taking medications; and
- treatment is for people who are “locos” (crazy).¹

A theoretically-informed, culturally-grounded depression *fotonovela* written in English and Spanish entitled “Secret Feelings” has been developed and tested for Latino populations. *Fotonovelas* are popular health education tools that use posed photographs, captions, and soap opera narratives to engage audiences and raise awareness about health or social issues.

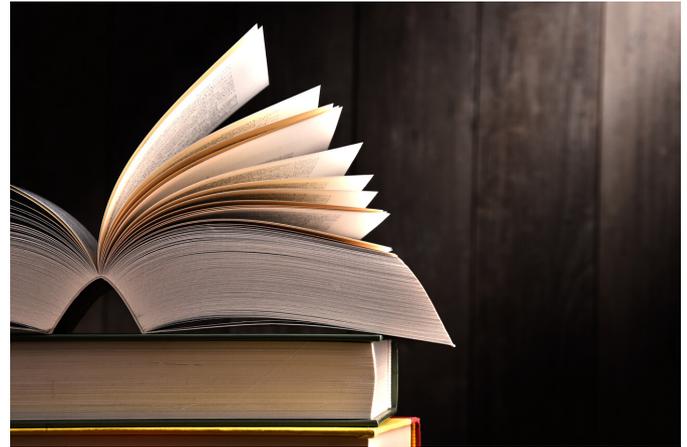
“Secret Feelings” aims to:

- increase knowledge by recognizing depression symptoms;
- learn about treatment options and where to seek help;
- reduce stigma by dispelling myths about mental health and depression as well as treatment, including medication;
- model help-seeking behaviors such as emotional support, proactive and positive help-seeking behaviors, and discuss options for treatment; and
- entertain while educating.^{2,3}



Cultural Relevance of "Secret Feelings"

At the surface level- noticeable differences in groups such as demographic, material, and behavioral; language and literacy level; and latin look and flavor.



At a deeper level- primarily out of conscious awareness such as assumptions, expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs that influence behaviors like narrative within a family context, and targets specific attitudes and stigma.

Secret Feelings is a useful tool for providers of mental health services for Hispanic and Latinos. Data indicates that it increases knowledge on depression, as well as decreases stigma towards treatment, and is likely to be shared with others in the community.^{4,5,6}



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