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## **Perceived racial discrimination linked to depression in African-American adolescent women**

**SAN ANTONIO** – Research conducted by Jessica Sales, associate professor in the department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education at Emory’s Rollins School of Public Health, examined the extent to which genetic variation—differences within a particular region of a gene (5-HTTLPR) that processes emotions—links to perceived racial discrimination and high levels of depressive symptoms in African American adolescent women.

Sales and her research team examined responses from a baseline survey of 304 African American adolescent women. They assessed psychosocial factors such as perceived racial discrimination and depression and analyzed participants’ saliva samples for genotyping.

The team found that an interaction between perceived racial discrimination and 5-HTTLPR was significantly associated with depressive symptoms.

“A growing body of research suggests that perceived racial discrimination is especially harmful to the mental health of African American youth,” said Sales. “Several cross-sectional studies have demonstrated that perceptions of racial discrimination are associated with lower self-esteem, increased anger, and increased anxiety and depressive symptoms among African American adolescents.

“Our findings show that there is a great need to develop interventions that address racial discrimination,” Sales continued. “Whether it’s addressing coping mechanisms, support system outreach or other methods for emotional regulations, these interventions are the first step in protecting our youth from the psychological effects of discrimination.”

Sales will present her complete findings at a poster session scheduled for 6 p.m. CT on April 23 during the Society of Behavioral Medicine’s 2015 Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions in San Antonio. Sales is a society member.

The poster is titled: “Genetic Sensitivity to Threat, Racial Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms among African American Adolescent Females.” Other authors are Jennifer Brown, of Texas Tech University, and Erica Smearman, Gene Brody and Ralph DiClemente from Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health. The authors report no financial or other conflicts of interests.

*The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) is a 2,200-member organization of scientific researchers, clinicians and educators. They study interactions among behavior, biology and the environment, and translate findings into interventions that improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities ([www.sbm.org](http://www.sbm.org)).*

*Emory University, recognized internationally for its outstanding liberal arts colleges, graduate and professional schools, and one of the Southeast's leading health care systems, is located on a beautiful, leafy campus in Atlanta's historic Druid Hills suburb ([www.emory.edu](http://www.emory.edu)).*

*This study will be presented during the SBM 2015 Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions, held April 22-25 in San Antonio. However, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of SBM. This poster presentation will be held on April 23. Given that this study was presented at a scientific meeting, the data and conclusions reached should be regarded as preliminary, until they are published in a peer-reviewed journal. Funding agencies played no role in this study. There are no conflicts of interest for the investigators.*

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