



Community-Based Strategies to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities: Facilitating Cancer Screening Among African Americans in South Carolina



SOUTH CAROLINA
Cancer Disparities Community Network

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Background

African Americans in South Carolina experience disproportionate cancer mortality as compared to other groups due to myriad factors, including lower participation in cancer screening and recommended follow-up care. Lower participation is likely the result of individual and system-level factors serving as barriers. Efforts to increase participation in cancer screening are important to reduce disparities in cancer incidence and mortality. The South Carolina Cancer Disparities Community Network (SCDCN) works in partnership with the State Baptist Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) Health Ministry using a community-based participatory research approach to address cancer-related health disparities among African Americans through research, education, and outreach. The Community Outreach Core (COC) of the SCDCN, which includes the State Baptist YWA Health Ministry, has developed and implemented three initiatives using a lay health advisor model to deliver evidence-based cancer education to increase awareness and knowledge of and promote participation in cancer screening in the African-American community.

Purpose

Knowledge of screening recommendations and intention to complete cancer screenings tests were targeted through the development and dissemination of culturally-appropriate cancer educational programs. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the impact and outcomes of the COC initiatives completed during a one-year timespan.

Methods

The COC has three main initiatives, the *South Carolina Witness Project*, *Prostate Cancer Screening: Is It Right For Me*, and *Cancer Health Disparities: What You Need to Know*, through which cancer screening messages based on the American Cancer Society's screening guidelines are delivered by lay health advisors. The COC developed content, training, and evaluation protocols for each initiative. Lay health advisors are community members who are trained to deliver educational sessions in teams. The COC recruits lay health advisors and provides them with ongoing training and technical assistance. Training sessions and educational sessions are evaluated with a pre-post test design. Completed evaluation forms are managed in Microsoft Excel and analyzed in SAS 9.4.

Initiatives

Cancer Health Disparities: What you Need to Know (CHD): CHD was developed beginning in 2009 in response to community requests for an educational program providing a comprehensive overview of cancer and cancer disparities. After three years of development with members of the African-American faith community, the CHD initiative formally launched in fall 2012. Lay health advisors are trained using a three-part, in-person training approach combined with technical assistance sessions. Educational sessions conducted in community settings inform participants about cancer disparities, etiology, and risk. Screening guidelines for breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer are described.

Prostate Cancer Screening: Is it Right for Me? (PrCA): Prostate cancer is a salient issue in the African-American community. The PrCA initiative uses a dialogue-based approach to allow session participants to get information about the state-of-the-science regarding prostate cancer screening and emphasizes informed decision making. The PrCA initiative was originally developed in 2004 and has been revised over time based on recommendations. Lay health advisors are trained in small groups to facilitate delivery of this initiative. Participants learn the pros and cons of prostate cancer screening and are encouraged to engage in dialogue with family members, friends, and health care providers regarding screening.

The South Carolina Witness Project (WP): The Witness Project is an evidence-based program to increase breast and cervical cancer knowledge and promote screening. The South Carolina WP, in corporation with the National Witness Project, was started in South Carolina in 2008. The program is delivered by a lay health advisor and cancer survivor called a "Witness". The Witness shares her experience with screening and treatment and encourages participants to complete breast and cervical cancer screening. Breast self exam is taught to participants as a tool to aid participants in becoming familiar with their breasts.



Table 1. Community Outreach Core Impact (7/1/2012-6/30/2013)

Initiative	# of Facilitators Trained	# of Educational Sessions	# Attending Educational Sessions	# of Evaluations Completed
CHD	14	12	605	401
PrCA	49	41	658	627
WP	17	37	2,501	253
Total	80	90	3,764	1,281

Results

From July 2012-June 2013, the three initiatives resulted in 80 lay health advisors trained and 90 community presentations conducted reaching 3,764 members of the African-American community (*Table 1*). Educational session participants had the option of completing pre- and post-test evaluation forms and 1,281 (34%) evaluations were returned to the COC for analysis. Increases in the percent of participants with correct responses to items assessing cancer screening knowledge ranged from 1% to 392% (*Table 2*). Post-test items assessed behavioral intention and revealed a high proportion of participants with intentions to complete screening, encourage others to complete screening and seek information about cancer (range 77% to 99%).

Table 2. Changes in Pre- and Post-test Responses for Selected Items

Initiative	Cancer Knowledge Items	% Change in Correct Responses from Pre-Test to Post-Test
CHD	Cancer screening tests can find some types of cancer early. (True)	+1%
PrCA	Experts agree that men should be screened for prostate cancer yearly. (False)	+392%
PrCA	PSA test result can suggest that a man does not have prostate cancer when he really does. (True)	+91%
PrCA	It is important for a man to know the risks and benefits of getting tested. (True)	+28%
WP	The Pap test (Pap smear) is a medical test to find out if you have cervical cancer. (True)	+4%
Initiative	Behavioral Intention Items	% Endorsing Statement After Attending Session
CHD	Encourage others to get screened for cancer.	90%
CHD	Continue to get screened for cancer, as recommended.	85%
CHD	Seek more information about cancer.	77%
WP	More likely to... Encourage others to get screened for cancer.	99%
WP	More likely to... Continue to get screened for cancer, as recommended.	98%
WP	More likely to... Seek more information about cancer.	96%

Conclusion

This community-academic partnership has effectively developed and disseminated culturally-appropriate, evidence-based cancer screening information. Evaluation results demonstrate the reach of the initiatives and increases of cancer screening knowledge and behavioral intention in participants. The use of community-engagement principles in combination with a lay health advisor model increases the capacity to deliver and sustain initiatives to promote cancer screening in the African American community.

