Introduction

Our community-based health promotion research project focused on better understanding the barriers and facilitators to accessing breast health in Windsor-Essex County within the context of language and cultural differences.

The project focused on ethno-cultural women from continental Africa and Asia (South Asians, East Asians and West Asians) who experience language and cultural challenges.

Objectives

To illuminate the experiences of ethno-cultural women in Africa and Asia (South Asians, East Asians and West Asians) who seek breast health services to ethno-cultural women whose first language is not English.

Methods

Using a CIR approach that conceptualizes research as a community dialogue and community engagement as a methodological practice, the project completed three main research activities:

- A comprehensive review of literature that summarized existing research regarding breast screening practices among ethno-cultural women in North America.
- A survey that assessed the capacity of Windsor-Essex community to provide culturally competent breast health care to ethno-cultural women in the Windsor community.
- Two main themes from the survey was the need for outreach to ethno-cultural communities with information and material in their own languages and the need for cultural competence training for service providers.
- In-depth interviews with 80 ethno-cultural women to explore their knowledge of breast cancer; beliefs regarding breast cancer; perceptions of health; and breast screening practices.
- Sampling criteria included ethno-cultural women from continental Africa and Asia (South Asians, East Asians and West Asians) who are 65 years old or older.
- Interviews were conducted by community liaisons in the first-language of participants, taped with their consent, transcribed verbatim and translated into English.
- The community liaisons used an interview guide that was focused on illuminating the ‘life world’ of participants and their personal experiences with breast health and breast cancer treatment.
- Participants were paid a small honorarium.

Results

Barriers To Breast Health For Ethno-Cultural Women

Psycho-Social-Cultural Barriers

1. Belief that breast cancer is a disease unique to women.
2. A culture of silence and secrecy about breast cancer.
3. A false sense of security from cultural and religious practices that are deemed to offer protection.
4. Gender roles that encourage women to prioritize other roles above caring for their own health.
5. No News is Good News – anxiety of finding out that something is wrong.

Organizational Barriers

7. Complex health system that is difficult to navigate.
8. Uncertainty with the health system that leads to challenges accessing services.
9. Lack of translation services to bridge language issues.
10. Education curriculum of health care students and continuing education curriculum of healthcare staff do not adequately focus on the importance of equity in health and how to address/overcome cultural and language barriers experienced by ethno-cultural women.

Systemic Barriers

11. Insufficient female health care providers – physicians, nurses, screening technicians, etc.
12. Lack of accessible transportation to breast screening centres.
13. Treatment vs. prevention focused health care system.
14. Fragmentation, lack of coordination of women’s health services.
15. Lack of social capital necessary to navigate complex health system.
16. Limited opening times of breast screening centres.

Promoting Breast Health for Ethno-Cultural Women

Introduction

The findings from these three research activities informed the development of a health promotion workshop to increase the knowledge of women from ethno-cultural communities on breast cancer and the importance of breast screening. The development of the health promotion workshop was guided by the following principles:

- We would collaborate with community organizations especially, ethno-cultural and religious organizations in hosting and delivering the workshops.
- We would draw on the expertise of members of these organizations in delivering the workshops.
- Workshops would be offered in the language that women prefer.
- Workshops would include content that women find relevant.
- Workshops would be offered in a setting that women find comfortable.
- Workshops would be provided free of charge.
- Workshops would be offered in a setting that women find comfortable.
- Workshops would be offered in a setting that women find comfortable.

Overview of the Main Sections of the HPW

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the workshops and review the agenda.

SECTION 1: Setting the Stage

Review the research and outcomes from the workshop.

SECTION 2: Overview of Research

This section provides an overview of the research and findings from the workshops.

SECTION 3: Breast Cancer Facts

- Facts about breast cancer in Canada, Ontario and Windsor-Essex are shared as well as risk factors.
- Provides the opportunity to highlight why it is important to have breast screening.
- Highlights information from the research that indicates ethno-cultural women do not access breast screening at the same rates as North American women and hence have higher mortality rates because breast cancer is often detected at later stages.

SECTION 4: Our Bodies, Our Health

Breast awareness is explained as a method to become more aware of your body. Our workshop encouraged the women to think about their breast health, to know their bodies and their breasts, and to report any changes in their breasts to a doctor.

Ethnic health promotion workshops were held in Windsor-Essex County along similar models that exist in other areas like Toronto.

Acknowledgement:

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Further Information:

Research bulletins and other information from this project are available at www.yorku.ca/aswreg.