

Women Inspiring, Serving and Educating (WISE) Project for Underserved Women - Early Results of an Educational Intervention Program

Background: The US “Healthy People 2010” program aims to attain a 70% breast cancer screening rate by 2010, regardless of race or social class such as minorities, the poor, the immigrants, and the uninsured. Innovative programs that address the access issues of the underserved populations are needed to achieve this goal.

Methods: Amarillo has a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual population. WISE program (funded by Komen Affiliate of Greater Amarillo) was designed after “Train the Trainer Model” to identify community enthusiasts through American Housing Foundation, and train them as educators for their peers on basics of breast health. Five training modules were created: (i) Risk reduction, (ii) Screening, (iii) Mastalgia, (iv) Lump and (v) Nipple Discharge. Demographic surveys were conducted and training was imparted on one module every two months. Materials were provided but women designed teaching strategies for peers. Four pre and post-training test questions were administered for each module. Two mammogram events were held.

Results: Ninety-six women completed the baseline survey [59(57%) non-whites; 28(29%) immigrants; 24(25%) rural setting; 47(49%) <high-school education; 53(55%) <\$20,000/yr household income]. Financial constraints (27 of 96; 28%) and embarrassment (22 of 96; 22%) were reported as the main barriers for screening mammograms. 43 (45%) women over the age of 40 never had screening mammogram. Among 41 (43%) screen-eligible women, non-whites (70% vs. 94%; $p=0.08$), women with level of education level higher than high school (67% vs. 79%; $p=0.6$), immigrants (57% vs. 80%; $p=0.18$) and women low income (63% vs. 100%; $p=0.0016$) were less likely to have ever had a mammogram. Five WISE women attended the training sessions and educated 16-29 peers in self-designed sessions. The mean/median difference in the number of correct responses between pre and post-tests for knowledge on basics of breast health were 1.05/1 for risk reduction ($p=0.0023$); 0.62/1 for screening ($p=0.0029$); 1.45/2 for mastalgia ($p=0.0015$); 1.75/2 for lump ($p=0.0021$) and 0.1/0 for nipple discharge ($p=0.7052$). WISE women tended to have a higher percentage of correct responses, but the difference between WISE women and their peers before and after training were not statistically significant. Eighteen of the 41 (44%) screen-eligible women opted to have a screening mammogram after attending the training modules.

Conclusion: Preliminary data documents the significant impact of the WISE woman program on knowledge, attitudes and practices of the underserved community in Amarillo regarding breast health.