Barriers to Cervical Cancer Screening for Hispanic/Latinx Women in the Harris Health Safety Net System

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Introduction

- Screening for cervical cancer in the U.S. involves Pap smears and testing for Human Papillomavirus (HPV)1
- Despite screening, Harris County is in the worst 25% of US counties for cervical cancer incidence2
- Previous studies have found that Latina women have the highest risk for cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates but are the least likely to seek screening3
- I aim to investigate the impact that primary language, English or Spanish, and place of birth have on cervical cancer screening barriers for Latinx women in Harris Health and what solutions can be implemented to overcome them.

Materials

- PRESTIS (Prospective Evaluation of Self-Testing to Increase Screening) sent self-testing kits to a subgroup of eligible and randomized Harris Health patients; 99 of 143 women returned the self-testing kits
- Telephone surveys were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on participant’s primary language
- Survey questions included: participant’s healthcare accessibility, common barriers to cervical cancer screening, their experience with the HPV self-sampling kit and/or patient navigation, knowledge or awareness of HPV and the HPV vaccine, demographics, and telehealth access
- All survey responses are recorded on Baylor College of Medicine’s REDCap4 database

Methods

- We utilized chi square statistical tests to assess differences between participant groups and constructed cross tabulations for analysis; SAS Version 9.4 was used for the analyses
- We compared barriers to participant’s primary language, English or Spanish, whether they were born in the United States or elsewhere, and to places of birth, Mexico or Central and South America.
- To reduce statistical variability, we combined no with unsure and left yes as the second option.

Results

- We assessed for five barriers: embarrassment, discomfort, uncomfortable with a male provider, hard to get an appointment, and fear of finding out they have cancer
- Majority of participants were Spanish speaking (83.9%), born in Mexico (54.2%), and had an average family income of <$20,000 per year
- 64.2% of Spanish speakers agreed that pap tests are embarrassing compared to only 39.1% of English speakers (P = 0.03) (Fig. 2)
- 70.0% of Spanish speaking participants stated that they would feel uncomfortable with a male provider giving them a pap test compared to 47.8% of English speakers (P = 0.05) (Fig. 2)
- Birthplace and whether the participant’s were born in the US did not have a significant effect on their answers for all five barriers

Future Directions

- It is necessary to develop educational training programs for Spanish medical translators to ease patient’s screening apprehensions
- Further understanding of the mechanisms causing differences in cervical cancer screening by primary language should be prioritized
- Explaining the Pap smear procedure to patients in greater detail could also help them overcome psychological barriers

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References

4) Baylor College of Medicine’s REDCap, Research electronic data capture (REDCap)

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