

Cervical Cancer Screening: Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices among Ethnically Diverse Black Women

Brown, DR, Wilson, R (*presenter*) Boothe, MAS, & Harris, CES



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Background

- **Black women have higher mortality rates from cervical cancer than women of other races**
 - 4.3 per 100,000 compared to 3.0 for Hispanic women and 2.2 for White women
- **Lack of information on cervical cancer morbidity and mortality rates for Black sub-populations**
- **Lack of literature that recognizes ethnic variation in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices towards cervical cancer screening within the Black population**

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Study Purpose

- **To examine knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding cervical cancer screening among ethnically diverse Black women**
- **Study Objectives:**
 1. **To examine the extent of cervical cancer awareness as well as knowledge and practice of cervical cancer screening**
 2. **To assess the barriers and facilitators to cervical cancer screening**

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Study Design

- **Descriptive study, using focus groups**
- **Study sample:**
 - 44 Black women (6 focus groups)
 - Recruited from a federally qualified health center
 - Direct invitation, word of mouth, and posters

Ethnicity	# of Focus Groups	# of women (%)
Haitian	1	8 (18.2%)
African	1	5 (11.4%)
English-speaking Caribbean (ESC)	2	12 (27.3%)
African American	2	19 (43.2%)

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Demographic Characteristics	Variable		% (n)
	Primary Language	English	61.4 (27)
	Creole	4.5 (2)	
	Multiple	34.1 (15)	
Age group	18-29	9.1 (4)	
	30-39	11.4 (5)	
	40-49	40.9 (18)	
	>50	38.6 (17)	
Educational level	Less than High School	23.2 (10)	
	High School or GED	44.2 (19)	
	Some College or Higher	32.6 (14)	
Income	<\$14,999	73.0 (27)	
	\$15,000-\$29,000	18.9 (7)	
	\$30,000-\$,60000	8.1 (3)	
Marital Status	Single	42.9 (18)	
	Married or living with partner	31.0 (13)	
	Divorced or Separated	11.9 (5)	
	Widowed	14.3 (6)	
Insurance	Medicaid	38.6 (17)	
	Medicare	4.5 (2)	
	Private Insurance	11.4 (5)	
	Other	9.1 (4)	
	None	29.5 (13)	
	Multiple	6.8 (3)	

Study Results

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Knowledge and Practices of Cervical Cancer

- **Limited knowledge and confusion about cervical cancer across ethnicities**
 - *“I know nothing. That’s why I was excited [to participate]...I know absolutely nothing.”* – African American participant
 - *“Yeah, I know the name, but I don’t know anything about it”* – African participant
 - *“Well, I never heard of cervical cancer until just lately - they’re advertising it on TV, and I’m like, ‘cervical cancer?’”* – ESC participant
 - *“I don’t think I ever heard of cervical cancer. I have seen commercials about it but I don’t know anything. What causes it.”* – Haitian participant

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Knowledge and Practices of Cervical Cancer

- **Unfamiliar with anatomical location of the cervix**
- **Confusion about the risk factors of cervical cancer**
 - **African women were least knowledgeable**
 - **Lack of proper hygiene, genetics, oral sex** (African women)
 - **Breast cancer** (African & African American women)
 - **Menopause, fibroids, hormonal imbalance** (Haitian & African American women)
 - **Sitting on a hot stone** (ESC women) **and hot vapor douching** (Haitian women)

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Knowledge of HPV as a Cause of Cervical Cancer

- 56.1% did not know about HPV
- Most African American and ESC women heard about HPV
- Limited knowledge and confusion about HPV and its connection with cervical cancer across ethnic groups
- Several women mentioned hearing about HPV on TV Commercials

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Knowledge of HPV as a Cause of Cervical Cancer

- ESC participants lacked specific knowledge
 - *“I know the name, I know what it stands for, but...”*
 - *“I think it’s human Papill virus, or something like that. When you have it, it’s like you’re more prone to develop cervical cancer.”*
- Haitian and African participants were not familiar with HPV
 - *“I don’t know about that one.”* – African woman
 - *“[I]t’s new. It came out one or two years ago”.* – Haitian woman

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Perceived Seriousness of HPV Infection

- When asked about STDs & STIs, participants listed most except HPV
- African American women had a misconception that HPV is serious because it leads to infertility
- In every group, they considered HPV infection serious because of its relationship with cancer
 - *“If it’s connected to cervical cancer, then yes...It’s a serious infectious disease”* – African American woman
 - *“It’s a silent killer.”* – ESC woman

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Knowledge and Practice of Cervical Cancer Screening (Pap Test)

Most recent Pap test	<1 year	57.5% (23)
	≥ 3 years	25.0% (10)
	Never/don’t know	17.5% (7)

- Most were aware of the Pap tests, but unaware of recommended screening guidelines
- African women had the least knowledge
- Haitian & ESC women did not hear about the Pap test in their countries of origin
 - *“I didn’t know about it until I came to America”*
 - *“People who make their kids in the CaribbeanI don’t think they are aware of that Pap smear thing.”*

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Facilitators of Cervical Cancer Screening

- **Doctor's recommendation** (all groups)
- **Having a female provider** (African American & African women) **for religious reason** (African women)
- **Information about screening and its importance for one's personal health**
 - “[I]t's good to take care of yourself...if you want to be alive...” – African woman
 - “To get you ahead of the game” – ESC woman
- **Health insurance** (Haitian), **cost** (Haitian, African American), **scheduling flexibility** (African American), **recommendation from a friend** (ESC), and **family history** (ESC)

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Barriers to Cervical Cancer Screening

- **Cost, busy schedule, & fear of the unknown** (all groups)
- **Lack of knowledge about cervical cancer** (ESC & African women)
- **Discomfort with the medical environment, unemployment, and immigration status** (Haitian women)
- **Discomfort with the instruments** (ESC women)
 - “You know, back home in Jamaica, I used to get afraid to do the Pap tests, because the thing they used to use was an iron-looking cold thing...but that used to be real bad. Trust me...” – ESC woman

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Conclusions & Future Considerations

- **Wide variation in level of knowledge about cervical cancer, its risk factors, and screening guidelines by Black ethnicity**
- **Having a health provider's recommendation is an important facilitator for cervical cancer screening**
- **Clearly evident need for education across all groups**
- **Effective educational interventions should target ethnically diverse populations of Black women by incorporating cultural considerations**
- **Need for additional studies using comprehensive approaches in order to combat this largely preventable disease and to eliminate cervical cancer disparities among ethnically diverse Black women**

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Questions!

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