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Perceived benefits, barriers, and interpersonal influences regarding breast cancer screening in three Arab American women subgroups

Background: Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States. Racial disparities in health in the US continue to influence breast cancer screening and early diagnosis even if socioeconomic status is controlled. Arab Muslim and Christian women from different Arab countries may perceive health and screening practices differently. Although general cultural themes can be established, the variations that exist between and within national groups of Arabs, such as country of origin and religion, are important aspects to be considered in the healthcare system to reduce racial disparities and ensure social justice.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore associations and compare sociodemographic characteristics of three Arab American women (AAW) subgroups across perceived benefits, barriers, and interpersonal influences regarding mammography screening. A review of literature supported the proposed study variables demonstrating direct and indirect influence on breast cancer screening.

Method: In this comparative, cross sectional study, 316 AAW from three Arab countries, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, completed a survey that combined the sociodemographic variables and the Arab Specific-Culture Barriers instrument. Pender's Health Promotion Model was employed to guide the exploration of different bio psychosocial variables in relation to mammography screening.

Results: Mammography screening rates among the three AAW subgroups were analyzed through descriptive statistical analysis. The results of this study revealed lower mammography screening rates among the three Arab American subpopulations compared to the national screening rate of 67% among all women aged 40 and older in the United States. Of the 316 AAW, 202 (63.9%) reported ever having a mammogram. Several variables influencing utilization of mammography screening were proposed. These variables included sociodemographic characteristics, age, country of birth, religion, marital status, and living status (whether or not the woman lived alone), perceived benefits, barriers, and interpersonal influences. Fisher's exact and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare women's sociodemographic characteristics across perceived benefits, barriers, and interpersonal influences. Significant differences and associations were found in this study between some of the sociodemographic characteristics and the variables of perceived benefits, barriers, and interpersonal influences. Religion was significantly associated with perceived benefits among Muslim and Christian women; and country of birth had a significant association with perceived barriers as Jordanian women perceived more barriers than Lebanese women. In addition, age and living status were the two sociodemographic variables associated significantly with perceived interpersonal influences. This study supports the previous literature conferring the importance of increasing efforts to improve mammography screening rates among AAW. The implications of such findings are significant to nursing practice, knowledge development, and research.

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Conclusion: Mammography screening rates in AAW are still lower than those of other ethnic women in the US; therefore, additional efforts are to be made to overcome barriers and motivate these women to make a decision of participating and adhering to BC screening. Influences of religion and culture were addressed in this study which indicated that both of these factors should be taken into consideration when educating AAW about mammography screening. Furthermore, future endeavors must be made to increase knowledge of those women about BC screening

Biography

Manal Alatrash is an Associate Professor of Western University of Health Sciences/ College of Graduate Nursing. She completed her doctoral degree (PhD) in Nursing from Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California. She obtained her Master's degree in nursing from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. where she majored in Adult Oncology Nursing. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Jordan University in Jordan. Her research focus is on preventive care and cancer screening in Arab American women to decrease health disparities in the United States. Dr. Alatrash has over 20 years of experience in clinical nursing and over 10 years in nursing education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She has contributed immensely to development of nursing curriculum and instructional support. Being a minority living in the US and having worked in the healthcare system in several developing and developed countries, she grew a special interest in global health and is currently contributing and committed to establishing a global health program with the College of Graduate Nursing at Western University of Health Sciences. Dr. Alatrash has special interests in clinical research and how research findings may influence global health. She conducted numerous research studies that focused on breast cancer screening among minority women in the United States and on related healthcare policies. She believes that nurses have an important role in enhancing global health. She is currently a primary investigator in a cross-sectional study to compare behaviors and attitudes of Lebanese American women regarding breast cancer screening to those of Lebanese women living in their native country, Lebanon. Dr. Alatrash has integrated technology into the curriculum and her teaching to enhance student learning. Her applications of technology have proved to be extremely valuable to any institution seeking to integrate computer technologies into its curriculum. Instruction, assessment, interaction, communication, documentation, administration and classroom management are just some of her areas of expertise as far as teaching is concerned

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