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Increasing cervical cancer screening for Vietnamese-American patients

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Cancer is the primary cause of death in Asian American women, with this population having the lowest rate of cancer screenings among all Americans. There are approximately 2 million people who identify as Vietnamese alone or in combination with other ethnicities residing in the United States. The incidence of cervical cancer has been decreased by half over the past 30 years due to early detection with screening. However, only 74-78% of Vietnamese-American women aged 18 and older have ever received a Pap test. Early identification of abnormal cells is not only important for the health outcome of the patient but also affects health care costs. A primary care office in Western New York found that patients referred to an OB/GYN for screening would not complete appointments as recommended. There are several hypotheses for this including patient reluctance to see a provider that does not speak their language, refusal to use interpreters as many are members of their community and there is a history of breach on confidentiality, and the cultural belief that a person is not sick until they are symptomatic. It is common for female Vietnamese patients to prefer a female provider, and male providers to be uncomfortable providing female exams. In an effort to increase these screenings, the male Vietnamese physician and the female nurse practitioner developed a new approach to increase patient uptake for screening. As this female provider does not speak Vietnamese, the physician interprets, then leaves the room while the nurse practitioner performs the exam, and returns at the end of the exam to interpret. This allows screenings to be completed and maintains the confidentiality of the patient. The patient only then needs to be referred to in the case of abnormal findings, which is generally accepted by the patient when a problem has been identified.

Biography

Karilee W Bingham is a Family Nurse Practitioner practicing in primary care and emergency medicine. She is a full-time Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing at the College at Brockport, State University of New York. She is currently a Doctor of Nursing Practice student at the College at Buffalo, State University of New York. She and her attending have developed a program to increase acceptance of cervical cancer screenings in their Vietnamese-American population, which is the planned topic of her capstone project.

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