

“If I Needed It, They Would Have Sent Me:” Cancer Screening, Knowledge and Adherence Among Older Hispanic Women

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Research Report No. 31

April 2002

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore factors, other than patient knowledge, that might explain low use of cervical and breast cancer screening among Hispanic women. A questionnaire was used to assess knowledge of screening recommendations and self-reported adherence among 70 older Hispanic women in Texas. Most had high knowledge levels, but this did not predict adherence. Fourteen women, all with high knowledge levels, also answered a semi-structured qualitative interview. Barriers to screening discussed in qualitative interviews included transportation, time, cost, and believing screening to be unnecessary following previous negative screening, or when sexual activity is absent. Reminders and referrals from primary care providers were key to reported adherence. Establishing policies and procedures to assure consistent cancer screening reminders and referrals may improve rates of cancer screening among women similar to those in our study, especially in settings where there is little opportunity to develop long-term patient-provider relationships.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Linda M. Hunt is Associate Professor of Anthropology and is jointly appointed to the Department of Anthropology and the Julian Samora Research Institute. She holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University. Her research has been concerned with health and health care among Latinos in Mexico and the United States, particularly focusing on issues of ethnicity and health, the management of chronic illness, and the culture of biomedicine.

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