

Addressing Disparities: The Alliance Breast Cancer Community-Based Program for Hispanic Women

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Background: The Alliance Breast Cancer (ABC) program is a community-based initiative developed and implemented to address the needs of Hispanic women faced with a cancer diagnosis or cancer survivorship issues.

Objectives: This article evaluates the effectiveness of a community effort to address breast cancer-related disparities among Hispanic women.

Methods: Nurse scientists collaborated with program staff to conduct a systematic five-year program evaluation. Data sources included monthly and annual reports, participant tracking databases, and an annual satisfaction survey.

Findings: Hispanic breast cancer survivors who participated in the program expressed feeling very satisfied with the services and believe that it addresses the specific barriers faced by this population. The ABC program serves as a best practice example to other communities forging partnerships to address health disparities and community needs in a culturally tailored manner.

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Culturally tailored interventions are needed at the community level to address cancer-related disparities among the growing number of underserved and diverse populations. This program description and evaluation focuses on a community effort to address breast cancer-related disparities among Hispanic women. The Alliance Breast Cancer (ABC) program is a community-based program that addresses local, cultural, and family-based needs, spanning the continuum of cancer care. With its three integrated components—educational outreach and screening assistance; a support group for women in treatment, survivors, and their loved ones; and in-home visits by trained fellow survivors—the program removes barriers to breast cancer screening and provides supportive care for Hispanic women and their families after a cancer diagnosis.

Background

Clear disparities in the health and survival experiences of Hispanic women with breast cancer persist. Cancer has

replaced heart disease as the leading cause of death among Hispanics in the United States (American Cancer Society, 2015b), and breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic women (Buki et al., 2008). Although rates of breast cancer are lower for Hispanic women than for Caucasian or African American women, Hispanic women are more likely to have significant sequelae and die from breast cancer, as well as become seriously ill, compared to their Caucasian counterparts (American Cancer Society, 2015a). These disparities are due, in part, to lack of access to adequate care, language barriers, lack of insurance, later stages of presentation, and a lack of understanding about treatment options (Juarez, Hurria, Uman, & Ferrel, 2013; Martinez-Ramos, Biggs, & Lozano, 2013).

Health disparities for Hispanic women span the continuum of care. Lower rates of early screening for Hispanic women and time delays to a definitive diagnosis can result in later detection of breast cancer and a decreased chance for survival (Ramirez et al., 2013). Disparities also affect the